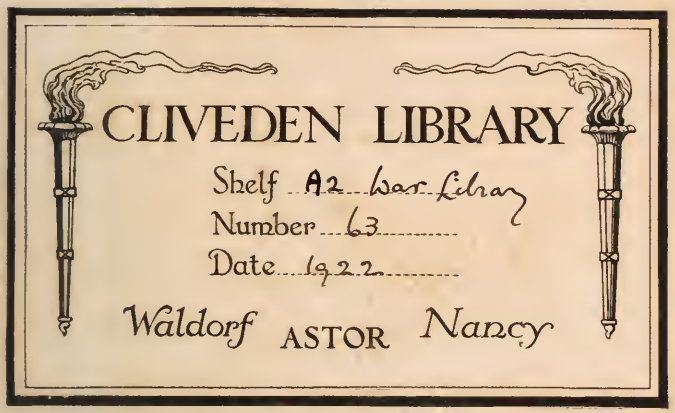
NAVAL INTELLIGENCE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Naval Intelligence

Naval Intelligence

BY THE AUTHOR OF

IN THE NORTHERN MISTS

GRAND FLEET DAYS ETC

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO
MCMXVIII

"The original photograph from which the picture on the wrapper is reproduced was taken from the author's ship, and has been passed by Admiralty Censor."

The Author begs to thank the Editors of THE SATURDAY WESTMINSTER, LAND AND WATER, *and* THE STAR *for their kind permission to reprint the following articles and sketches; and similar thanks are due to the Editor of* THE DAILY EXPRESS *with respect to some of the verses.*

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I. Naval Intelligence

ALLOW me to open this subject with an appropriate story about our Puss. It is an absolutely true story, and ought really to have been sent to the *Spectator* and headed "Extraordinary Intelligence of a Ship's Cat."

This remarkable animal lives on terms of more or less malevolent neutrality with the Commander's bulldog; an obstreperous, galumphing creature whose crude idea of humour is to spring suddenly upon Puss and bark at her in a most disturbing and fur-raising fashion. Puss is no hoyden, and does not appreciate this at all!

The other day she was graciously giving us the honour of her presence in the ante-room, when we saw her give a sudden start and execute a lightning right-about-turn in mid-air, coming down again in the fraction of a second facing the door and in a very defensive and fluffed-up attitude. Naturally, we looked to see the bulldog entering the room. But there was no sign of him, nor was his raucous voice to be heard, even in the distance; only the steward made his appearance, coming in on his lawful occasions.

There were reproachful heads shaken at Puss, accusing her of a departure from her customary quickness of perception; till, all at once, it dawned upon us that what we took for unwonted dullness was really an exhibition of preternatural intelligence. The steward's name was *Barker!*

But it is not only amongst the Higher Animals of our naval universe that intelligence is cultivated and displayed; even from base humans it is demanded, and the supply is—sometimes—equal to the demand.

Indeed, there exists at the Admiralty a special Department dealing solely in this mental product. It is called the Naval Intelligence Department; and a close acquaintance with its methods and its publications leads me to believe that it is named on the same principle as was, according to Professor Bryce, the Holy Roman Empire.

From this centre of light the radiance of Naval Intelligence extends in all directions. Its beams illuminate even the ultra-Neptunian orbit of the average Midshipman. Witness the case of the midshipmen of a certain ship in the Grand Fleet—no, not this ship, nor even in this squadron.

The Admiral of the ship in question is a very intellectual man, and immensely energetic; he takes a great interest in the welfare of his officers, and is especially keen on the proper upbringing of the juniors. So, thinking perhaps that some of the Young Gentlemen might be prone to give way to the temptations of idleness unless some constructive occupation were provided for them, he

conceived the idea of ordering the midshipmen to prepare a Lecture for delivery before an audience composed of the whole of the ship's officers. The general subject was to be "The World's Greatest Men"; each midshipman being allowed to select his favourite Greatest Man and to work up the subject according to his own ideas.

Need I say that the Young Gentlemen did not at all appreciate this solicitude for their moral and intellectual well-being? But, of course, they complied with the order, and in due time delivered their lectures. And whom do you think they picked as their "World's Greatest Men"? The first midshipman chose Nietzsche; the second, Treitschke; and the third—*the Kaiser!*

That put a stop to the lectures. Who now will be bold enough to say that midshipmen are lacking in Naval Intelligence?

And I must not omit to add that they were, all three of them, remarkably good lectures too!

For an example of the intelligent grasping the skirts of opportunity it would hardly be possible to cite a more apt case than that of one of our men who came to me recently requesting to join up with my lower-deck French class.

"Do you know any French at all?" I asked him.

"Not very much, sir; just a little."

"But how much, exactly, do you know?" I repeated, with the object of finding out how near he might be to the level of the others.

"Well, sir," he said, "I just know *un, deux, trois, quatre,* and *bonsoir,* and one or two little

things like that ; you see, sir, *I went out for a walk one evening with a young French lady !* "

That branch of my subject which deals with Intelligent Anticipation has reference principally to two problems alone, so far as the Navy is concerned. They are (1) When will the War end ? and (2) Shall we get another smack at the Hun fleet ? Neither of these subjects for prophecy has the merit of novelty, as you will doubtless observe ; yet they are both of perennial interest to us, and moreover are closely intertwined, seeing that we hope to goodness the war won't come to a stop without our having a "little turn-out" at sea. But Intelligent Anticipation has not, up to the present, provided much help towards the solution of either problem, and all that we venture to say with any confidence is that if a general Fleet Action *should* occur, the fault will not be ours if the end of the war does not follow very quickly after !

Nor must I omit a reference to the classical subject of Intellectual Damages ; for these surely are due to us, estranged as we are from those who, according to Tennyson, "are twice as quick" as we dull-witted males. For what good is it for a man "to have a wife at home who keeps him tight"—(what *would* the Strength of Britain people have said to the Laureate if he had lived to see their day ?)—when he is for such long periods cut off from that pleasurable discipline ?

II. *The Three "Squeakers"*

THEY came on board H.M.S. *Fearnaught* in a body—a body of three; and a poor pathetic little body of three they looked, too. In their little new uniform suits with the naval cadet's strip of white braid on the collar, and their little new caps with very shiny peaks, they seemed more like small schoolboys rigged out for a fancy-dress ball than naval officers.

All of them were pink-faced, and all had thick hair growing well down over the temples towards their bright eyes, and springing luxuriantly from the crown of their foreheads. Indeed, had this hair been allowed to grow a little longer, they could very well have passed themselves off as girls—yes, and quite pretty girls.

As a matter of fact, this was one of the earliest things they were called upon to do after joining the ship. The beauty-chorus of the *Fearnaught's* funny-party had become decidedly passé, all its members having been rated ordinary seamen and cultivated bass voices; so they suffered the same bitter experience as other chorus ladies have done before at the hands of revengeful Time, and were

pushed out to make way for our three new cadets.

They reported themselves to the commander, who gazed after them with a whimsical smile as they trotted off towards the gunroom. "Good Lord!" he sighed. "It seems a shame to send such babies to sea! Poor little squeakers!"

Then he called them back, to say, "One moment—I forgot to ask you your names."

The three little Squeakers stood stiffly to attention in front of him, so very seriously "strict service" in their demeanour that the commander had to bite his brown moustache in order to suppress a smile.

"Parker, sir," said the first, in a piping treble.

"Johnson, sir," said the second Squeaker.

"Johnson, sir," said also the third.

"Both of you called Johnson?"

"Yes, sir," from the two simultaneously.

"Brothers, eh?"

"No, sir, no relation. He is C. M. Johnson and I am C. F."

"That won't do," the commander smiled, shaking his head. "Not distinction enough. Which of you two is the junior?"

"I am, sir," replied C. M.

"Then, Johnson junior, you will have to be Jackson on board this ship. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," meekly agreed Johnson junior; and Jackson he became from that moment.

Once installed in the gunroom the Three Squeakers came under the direct and drastic

orders of that powerful autocrat the Senior Sub-lieutenant.

The rule of the Senior Sub is an unlimited monarchy. All the Rights of Sac and Soc, all the Laws of the Medes and Persians, all the Privileges of the Ancienne Noblesse, and all other powers held by all other peoples in all other ages—boil them all down into one, and they are as nothing to the sway exercised by the Senior Sub-lieutenant in the gunroom of one of H.M. ships of war.

His word has to be obeyed, unquestioningly, and "at the double." What would happen if any unfortunate snotty or cadet ventured to be slack about it I do not know. And as for venturing to disobey—the very idea is so far beyond the range of practical politics that it is not even worth thinking about.

In this particular case the Senior Sub was a man of some humour—as, indeed, he generally is. So when our Three Squeakers came into his kingdom he conceived the idea of combining amusement with instruction, and informed them that they would please consider themselves as collectively rated "Kitchener's Army."

Kitchener's Army, within a very short time, became quite perfect in what was perhaps the most amazing form of army drill ever invented.

At the order "One" they would dash off to a selected part of the gunroom and take up their stand beneath a T-beam in the deck above. "Two!" they grasped the beam with both hands

and swung themselves up till their toes rested also on the beam, the resulting appearance being somewhat that of a pig tied by its four feet and slung from a pole. "Three!" and they let go the hands and swung by the toes only: not at all a comfortable position, and one demanding much agility to avoid falling on the deck head first.

There were several other items of the drill, equally interesting; but perhaps the great star performance consisted in the army removing from the mess anyone whom it was desired to eject, from the motive of pure joie de vivre. This usually took place on Guest Nights.

"Kitchener's Army will now put out Mr. Heavysides," the order would be given. "Shun! At the order *Out Heavysides*, Lieutenant Heavysides is to be at once put out—*Out Heavysides!*"

And, like a lion pulled down by a pack of hunting-dogs, the fourteen-stone lieutenant found that he had to go; not, however, till the Three Squeakers and their victim had come into violent contact with most of the gunroom furniture, and had done their outfitters a good turn by rendering necessary various repairs to shirts and monkey-jackets.

Parker, who was the most junior of the three, was also told off to act as Gramophone-Motor, a job which perhaps needs a little explanation.

The fact is, the gunroom gramophone had been made to work overtime without any war bonus for twenty consecutive months, and had at last

gone on strike; the spring refused to work any longer. Now it was unthinkable that the gunroom should be deprived of the music of the "Bing Boys" and "To-night's the Night"; so the order was given—"Gramophone's main engines to be turned by hand; engineer of the watch-and-stop-on, Mr. Parker." And Mr. Parker was consequently obliged to twiddle the records round with his finger whenever it pleased the gunroom to listen to the strains of music.

It is an exercise splendidly adapted to train the finger muscles, but becomes rather tiring unless you change fingers several times in the course of a record.

But the Squeakers grew, both bodily and mentally, with amazing rapidity. Ship's food and a healthy life in the open air of the North Sea did the work for their bodies; they lengthened and filled out till their little uniforms in which they had joined the ship were a world too small; and their parents must have pulled long faces over the outfitters' bills that kept coming in.

The childlike faces, too, became set in a firmer mould, and the blue eyes began to look out with that steady confidence which comes from Responsibility.

And little by little they learnt their Trade.

It was a proud day when they were each given charge of a picquet boat; certainly they were a little nervous about it to begin with, and owed much to the boats' coxswains—men old enough to be their fathers. But they learnt by experience—sad experience sometimes!

One night a steam cutter belonging to one of the small ships went ashore and was in difficulties, and a picquet boat from the *Fearnaught* was sent to tow her off. It was a wild night, pitch dark, and a heavy sea running, with the wind set dead against the shore.

Parker was the midshipman of the duty boat, and a message came down to him in the gunroom just as he was sitting down to snatch a bit of dinner, having got back from his last trip only a few minutes before. Quickly the lad flung on his oilskin and sou'-wester, and twisted a thick muffler round his neck—and away out into the darkness and the white-capped rollers. He was drenched to the skin, and dog tired; but what was that, when next morning the captain sent for him and said: "Mr. Parker, you handled your boat very well last night; I am pleased with you!"

Johnson is going in for gunnery. He is the midshipman of a turret; and once, not long ago, when the officer of the turret went sick for a few days, Johnson drilled the turret all by himself. I doubt if ever an invalid got less sympathy from anybody than this turret officer got from Johnson, whose only dread was that his senior might recover too rapidly.

"If only," thought the youngster, "he could *stay* sick for a bit, we might have a Stunt, and I should get a chance of having a whang at the Huns!"

And Jackson—poor little Jackson! The gamest of the three, if there were anything to choose

between them! He was lent to a destroyer, to his immense delight! . . . And now his mother tries bravely to dry her tears when she looks at a certain brass memorial on the chancel wall of the village church. She cannot visit the grave where her heart and her son lie buried—that is fathoms deep out in the North Sea.

III. Mouldies

IT is not as a naval expert that I wish to dilate upon the subject of mouldies—that is to say, torpedoes, which are also known as Twickenhams, though I cannot for the life of me say why. In fact, my technical knowledge of these products of the higher civilisation goes very little beyond the fact that they can do everything but talk, and I only have this on the doubtful authority of our torpedo-lieutenant, who is given to romancing about the capabilities and performances of his pets, much in the same way as a fond mother discourses of her progeny, or an otherwise honest man of a horse he wishes to sell.

I do, however, lay claim to the knowledge that the earliest form of mouldy was a contrivance known as a spar-torpedo. It was an explosive charge attached to the end of a long spar, which was rigged out over the bows of a steamboat. The idea was that the boat should tilt at the enemy ship, and as soon as the charge touched her side she would blow up. If the ship would not wait to be touched that, of course, would not be observing the rules of the game, and would be

manifestly unfair. Also, I cannot say what would happen to the enterprising assailants in the steamboat, supposing they won the Game of Touch. "Oh, they would be all right," our torpedo-lieutenant airily assures me. But I have my doubts. He recommended me to bathe yesterday, and declaimed enthusiastically about the delightful temperature of the sea—but I noticed that he didn't go in himself! This, however, is an attitude in which the torpedo-lieutenant is by no means singular; there are a great many pebbles on the beach who are very like him when they ask from their club arm-chairs, Why don't they bombard Heligoland? or Why don't they start the Great Push?

There is a gyroscopic device in the torpedo's lower abdomen which ensures its running on its appointed course disdainful of all side-issues and backstairs influences. Nothing can turn it aside when once it is started, this green-sea incorruptible; it goes on like a Parliamentary bore, undeterred by any efforts to head him off. You might, for example, supposing you were swimming, and a torpedo chanced to come careering past you, give it a good hard push (though I should not advise you to), in a playful attempt to divert it towards some other bather whom you never really quite liked. Your efforts, however, would be entirely useless; after a brief sideways plunge the torpedo would swing back again into the path of rectitude, and proceed once more with unerring exactness towards its set goal, like a Nemesis who has had a

youthful lapse from virtue—as, indeed, most of those old Greek divinities had. Anyhow, it would go straight on.

Perhaps. But then, again, perhaps not. For there is this glorious uncertainty about the torpedo, that you may have it vaccinated and confirmed, send it to a Sunday-school, make it join the Band of Hope and the Y.M.C.A., give it a Public School education, and see that its College Tutor is a really serious-minded man—and as likely as not, as soon as you launch it on its career, all those nicely calculated adjustments and infallible precautions somehow go wrong, and—it turns right round and hits the ship that fired it! It is a comforting thought that you can always take it in hand and readjust it, with much care and labour, and another time it will run straight. Try it and see; it is well worth the while!

Of course, *our* mouldies never do anything of this sort! Our torpedo-lieutenant will tell you that, and he ought to know, if anyone does!

This is a subject which provides much matter for self-laudation on the part of the gunnery-lieutenant, who says that *his* projjes don't come back again when once they have left; many are the discussions on this topic to which it has been my unhappy fate to listen; and the only conclusion I have arrived at is that what the gunnery-man thinks about torpedoes is only equalled for depth of contempt by the torpedo-man's opinion of guns.

But why are they called "mouldies"? Be-

cause it is such a mouldy game to let loose three or four hundred pounds weight of high explosive against your foe without giving him a sporting chance to avoid it or to hit back.

When they were first invented they were rejected by the nations as "infernal machines," unfitted to honourable warfare. But ideas changed; and with the improvements in modern gunnery it became evident that there is very little to choose between a big shell fired through the air and a torpedo fired under the water—so long, of course, as they are used as a weapon against fighting-ships and fighting-men; for these must take their chances and may hit back if they can. It was reserved for the apostles of Kultur to launch them against passenger-liners, against women and children.

IV. Trench-Parties

FROM the point of view of the War-of-the-Future Novelist, present events have proved a vindication of many of the ingenious imaginings committed to print during the last few years. All the amazing developments of modern warfare, ranging from the super-scientific to the ultra-diabolical, must produce a very comfortable "I-told-you-so" feeling in the breasts of writers of this school, who probably are convinced that the latest inventions have been adopted just to oblige them.

But an entirely new sensation, surpassing the wildest flights of fancy of the most daring imaginations, has surprised us in this war; nothing like it has ever happened in any previous conflicts, from the battles of Chedorlaomer to those of Oom Paul; and Mr. Wells, Ole Luk Oie, or Mr. Childers—let alone myself—would never have ventured to foretell anything so extremely unlikely as the Personally Conducted Tours to the Trenches which have recently become so popular.

The Navy, ever conservative, has been the latest to adopt the vogue set by so many important

people and so many other people who think themselves important; but we have at last followed it, and more than one detachment of men has gone from the Grand Fleet to Flanders.

There is, naturally, a great amount of keenness to be chosen as one of a Trench-Party; for one thing, to get away from the ship is a kind of first-cousin to "going on leaf," and even if it does not carry with it the attractions of a properly constituted beano it is at least a relief to the monotony of ship-life; then, seeing that we have heard tell as how there is a war going on somewheres, it is gratifying to be able to substantiate the rumour with the witness of our own eyes and to reassure our messmates of the fact that Germans really do exist. And there is also a chance of even getting a little taste of a scrap with the enemy.

Two or three men from this ship have been lucky enough to be selected for Trench-Parties. The qualifications necessary to selection are few, and easily fulfilled. The man must be of very good character, such a one as may be relied upon to do credit to the Navy in general and his ship in particular; and he must be known as an intelligent observer who can on his return give an instructive account of his experiences—for the Navy is a place where the law of Nothing-for-nothing holds strictly good.

The first man who went was a seaman petty-officer, a steady, well-educated man. He gave a lecture to us afterwards, in fact repeated it several times to various audiences from different portions

of the ship's company, and a better lecturer you would not wish to hear.

Not his were any such experiences as fell to the lot of that other Trench-Party, now known and envied by all, who gloriously stepped into the breach when the soldier-heroes had fallen, and handled bayonet and maxim-guns right skilfully, saving the day and earning well-deserved honours for themselves; but an unexpected recrudescence of "activity" kept him for thirty-six hours in a trench where the water was well above his knees, and he quickly came to the conclusion that he could get all the water he wanted in the North Sea, without going to the trenches for it!

Another man I heard of who, having experienced somewhat similar conditions of trench life, found the duffel-suit with which he was provided so heavily caked with mud that to carry it any further became an impossibility, and he threw it away. And on his return to his ship he was charged that on the date mentioned he, being in possession of one duffel-suit, did, by neglect or default, lose it; and was ordered to pay the cost thereof, the said duffel-suit being the property of the Crown. A grisly anti-climax to the excitement of visiting the trenches!

Our lecturer had no such warm clothing, but at his own charges spoiled a perfectly good number one suit which he was saving up to go on leave with.

One thing in particular appeared to have struck him, as it did also all others who have gone after

him, and that was the unshaken cheeriness of the Tommies under continuously trying conditions, and the perfect accord existing between them and their officers.

The next trench-party man to go from our ship was of a different type—shrewd and resourceful, and determined to acquire something more than merit. He reappeared among us with a large bag packed full with "trophies"—a German helmet, fragments of shell, bullets of various kinds, bombs and grenades, both of the jam-tin kind and the more scientific variety. "But where did you get the bag to hold them all?" our commander asked him. "Oh, I took that with me," replied the man. Moral philosophers tell us that it is a great thing to know exactly what it is you want, and still more important to prepare for opportunities before they eventuate; our representative had certainly acted up to such teaching!

At the present time we have another man absent on the same interesting duty. May he have the luck to strike a good blow for his country and the Navy, and come back with a medal on his chest!

V. Cenzu.

VINCENZIO was his real name, or rather one of the half-dozen names bestowed upon him in his baptism; but it had become softened into Cenzu according to the custom of his island home—a place which every Englishman who sojourns there hates violently for the first three months, and then for ever after loves with an affection almost equal to that of the native-born.

His early youth was spent for the most part up in the bows of his father's dghaisa, sitting down and pulling at the same oar which the boatman in native style stood up to and pushed like a gondolier; only, Cenzu was so small that he, too, had to stand and rise to his full height of four-foot-nothing at every stroke, bumping down heavily again and tugging away till his little brown arms and legs glistened with the moisture of honest toil. A most engaging imp was Cenzu at this period, and many were the coins which soft-hearted English ladies slipped into his little paw, notwithstanding the fact that his father had already charged them half as much again as his legal fare.

Even at this period he regarded the British Navy as his own peculiar perquisite; he adopted it, or, you might say more correctly, he was born to it. The Navy was his foreordained profession. Or, again, it was his Alma Mater; and therefore he was quite justified in considering that the only relation to be cultivated at first between the Navy and himself was that this Nourishing Mother should look after his material needs. Later on he would work for her. So the sailors of the old *Egmont*—named the *Hibernia* at that time—accepted the presence of the small black-haired, barefoot boy who used to make a daily pilgrimage along the mess-decks about meal times; and the broken victuals that got stowed away inside his jumper were generally enough to fill not alone his own little stomach, but those as well which belonged to a still smaller Manuele and a tiny Cicca at home in Zabbar.

Surely this small debt was amply repaid a little later on, when he spent another long portion of his boyhood as a makee-learn pantry boy on board one of His Majesty's ships of war at sea; an unpaid, unrecognised member of the community, not entered on the ship's books, not victualled by the paymaster, and subsisting only on the scraps that fell from the wardroom table. In this way he voyaged over most of the Mediterranean, acquiring experience and learning his profession. And amongst the many side-lines of this profession must be reckoned a knowledge of tongues, for it is no use to go marketing at Lagos or Marmarice,

Arosa Bay, or such-like places, unless you can bargain with the cunning merchantmen in their own language.

Cenzu himself thought very little of this many-sided acquirement of his, and regarded it merely as having its uses in the traffic of the market place; the idea of studying the literature of these foreign races would certainly never have entered his head! For his own private reading he kept a certain well-thumbed copy of "Lives of the Saints," written in his dearly loved native tongue, which appears to consist chiefly of the letters x and k. A certain officer, wishing to ingratiate himself with a willing servant, thought to please him one day by addressing Cenzu in the only phrase of the language he knew—"Ma tixtax tobzok"; this he had seen written up in the Sliema puffers. But as the words mean "Do not spit," the well-meaning effort failed of its purpose.

At the age of eighteen Cenzu came to us as Second Wine Steward: a high-sounding title, which really covers a number of useful and laborious services. If you want any odd jobs done for you on shore, Cenzu is the fellow to do them; when the marine servants are standing off for coaling, Cenzu will wait on the whole mess as if he were ten waiters rolled into one.

He doesn't get called by his rightful name very often; generally it is "Ao, Jose" that fetches him from the precincts of the pantry; and he will answer with equal willingness to Baptista,

Carlo, or any other of the names that have become familiar to us by a long acquaintance with his race.

But you must not offend his dignity. You must treat him with decent respect and kindliness, for he is a member of the British race, like yourself; and I hope that one day he will rise to the proud position of Messman, and thence soar higher and become a Contractor. For he is a cheery, willing, self-respecting, well-behaved—Maltese.

VI. Motherbank.

JOHN WILMOT TALLIS, retired Commander R.N., stood at a window in his house near Cowes, and swore softly to himself as he looked down upon the ancient ships lying in the Motherbank.

They reminded him too forcibly that his own day, like theirs, was done; the Navy had no more use for him than it had for these vessels whose names appeared only at the end of the Navy List under the heading of Obsolete and for sale. Moreover, the bitterness was increased by the fact that at least two of the craft beneath his eyes were ships in which he had served years before; and smart ships, too, they had been in their day.

But their day was over, long ago. Row after row of such obsolete vessels lay bunched together in the Motherbank: old battleships, old cruisers, old gunboats, and torpedo craft; vessels, in short, of almost every type—a complete, if small, navy in themselves; and all of them hopelessly out of date.

There was surely some kindly sentiment that suggested the Motherbank as a last resting place

for these ancient ships. The very name seemed to promise a peaceful shelter for them—as though a tender mother were gathering her tired children to rest in her arms after a long, long day.

Commander Tallis, however, was not deceived by any such sentiment; *he* knew that the old ships, rotting and rusting in the Motherbank, were in a like case with those old worn-out horses that wait for the knacker's yard. From time to time a ship would disappear, sold to be broken up; and it was rather ghastly to look at the ever-dwindling remainder, and wonder which would be the next to be led away.

As a matter of fact, both ideas were quite mistaken—the dismal idea equally with the sentimental one. Ships are very much alive, and have very highly developed personalities of their own, as every sailor knows; and their being placed on the Retired List, so to speak, had no more effect on these old Salts than on Commander Tallis himself.

Alive they were, and all their old characteristics still clung to them, accentuated even by increasing years. Brought together by chance, and doomed to long companionship with one another, the ships constituted a sort of club—a club into which all sorts of incongruous members had obtained entrance, and where even ladies had gained a footing.

Oh, the times that have been! And, Ah, the days that we've seen! That formed the subject-matter of most of the converse on the Motherbank. Wild days, too, some of them, by all accounts;

as the ground-swell gently rocked the veterans you could have sworn they were shaking their great sides and chuckling over their reminiscences !

" You mustn't judge me by what I am now," said the great battleship *Hood* ; " you should have seen me in my old Channel Fleet days ! My sides were as black as your hat then, and shining like a dollar—none of your nasty grey paint that they spoil ships with nowadays ! And as for my bright work—why, it positively made you wink ! Oh, I tell you, I was some ship in those days ! "

This remark was intended for the benefit of a little knot of smaller ships lying near.

" Yes," commented *Orlando* in a sniggering aside, " and a bright lad he was, too, at that time ! Do you know what they used to call him ? The '*Tiddly*' *Hood*—meaning, of course, that he used to fill his tanks with something stronger than *water !* "

Orlando liked to think himself a terrible fellow with the ladies, but, as a matter of fact, these latter for the most part snubbed him on all occasions. *Pomona* did so now indeed, the dainty little ship whom he had favoured with his remarks. For her part she shrugged her shoulder, and leaned gently over to her neighbour *Melpomene.* " Huh," she sniffed, " *he* needn't talk ! *He* got a pretty name for himself out in Australia ! Oh, I remember ! "

But the bigger and more dignified ships disapproved of this tittle-tattling and bickering.

" I shouldn't be surprised," growled the old

admiral *Anson,* "if we were to get a look in even yet. They may be glad of us before things are finished with!"

"I shouldn't be surprised," growled retired Commander John Wilmot Tallis as he stood at his window and swore softly to himself, "I shouldn't be surprised if some of us retired fellows were to get a look in yet. They may be glad of us before it is all over." Then he held forth for quite a long time on the degeneracy of naval men of the present time as compared with those of his own day. There was nobody to listen to him, but it relieved his mind.

At least, he thought there was no one to listen to him.

Gillian, his daughter, coming up behind him quietly, put a soft hand over his mouth.

I regret to say she giggled. "It ought to be ashamed of itself, so it did, saying all those naughty words," she admonished him, as she tucked her arm into his and led him out through the French window on to the lawn.

Gillian, I am afraid, did not take her father very seriously. To do her justice, however, she was always ready to make excuses for him. "You can't blame him, after all," she used to say, "if he does get a bit quarter-decky at times, after the poor darling has spent all those years at sea!"

Lieutenant Dane agreed on this point with Gillian. Though, to tell the truth, there were very few points on which he did not agree with her, because he liked her very much indeed—as

you would have done, too, if you had known her. Jack Dane, having lately obtained his lieutenant's stripe and serving as he was in one of the newest and fastest light cruisers, could afford to be indulgent towards those who were unfortunate enough to have been left out of the war.

"It must be awfully rough on your Governor," he said, "being stuck on the beach and obliged to watch us other blighters getting all the fun. Doesn't he hate it? Why doesn't he try to get taken on again?"—"As if he hasn't tried!" laughed Gillian. "Why, the poor dear has been badgering the Admiralty to give him a job since the very day the war broke out!"

"Well, it seems jolly hard lines," commented Jack. "He might do very well—not, of course, in a modern ship, but there's many a billet that would suit him. Why, he might cover himself with glory and medals—you never know!"

Again this undutiful daughter giggled. "Fancy Dad being a Little Hero!" she replied; "can you imagine it?"

By a curious coincidence it happened that just about that very time a rumour became current amongst the ships of the Grand Fleet to the effect that some of the ancient vessels in the Motherbank were to be put into commission. Jack Dane's ship, the *Caroline*—(an inveterate gossip, *Caroline*)—came alongside the *Iron Duke* one day and spread the yarn.

"Have you heard the news?" she sniggered; "they are actually going to commission old

Hecuba! What good can *she* be? Why, she has been out of the Navy for years and years, laid up at the Motherbank!"

The majestic *Iron Duke* looked down upon the little chatterbox with a slight frown. It was, he felt, somewhat lowering to his dignity even to permit himself to be addressed in such a frivolous manner. So he replied, courteously yet conclusively, "The older vessels are by no means to be despised." And *Caroline* flicked her screws and sheered off with a hoity-toity bows-in-the-air attitude.

It was a great day for Commander Tallis when he received an appointment to the *Hecuba,* in command. Not so for Jack Dane, sent to the same ship, and taken out of his modern cruiser; though the fact that the *Hecuba* was commissioned "for special service" helped to mitigate his chagrin, since the terms of such a commission seemed to hold out hopes of something out of the ordinary—perhaps the chance of a scrap.

And now behold the old *Hecuba* renewing the days of her youth! True, she felt strange at first in her new grey dress, but—if one may express it thus coarsely—she had a very satisfied feeling below the belt, now that her magazines and storerooms were filled as of olden days. And it was good also to feel the deep Atlantic beneath her keel. So she flung up her head coquettishly on meeting the long rollers, old acquaintances of the bygone days, and tossed the white spray aside in her playfulness. Oh, it was a fine thing to be a

"Ship of War at Sea" again, and not a sheer hulk lying helpless and useless at the Mother-bank!

Commander Tallis had very much the same sort of feeling. But the greatest day of all, both for ship and ship's company, was the day that they met the German raider and fought that description of fight which is the highest ambition of a sailor—a single-ship action.

For full three hours they kept at it, hammer and tongs, ding-dong, up and down, manœuvring for position, and blazing away for all they were worth. The German was a much larger vessel and carried a heavier armament, but the old *Hecuba* stood up to her and gave as good as she got. She was badly knocked about; already several fires had been extinguished with difficulty, and at the same time the carpenters had to cope with the water that poured in at the waterline. Casualties were many, and Tallis himself was carrying his left arm in an improvised sling. But the German ship was in no better case, and had received just as severe a hammering.

Neither vessel, however, had been put out of action even after all this fighting, and it looked as though the engagement might continue for many hours more at this rate.

There came a time, though, when the raider's fire began to slacken. And just about the same period of the action Lieutenant Dane, who was in the battery, dashed up to the captain with a rueful face to report that all the ammunition was

expended; the last round had been fired, and the guns were now useless!

Evidently the raider was fast approaching the same condition; but she had not quite arrived at it yet, and was still firing, though only intermittently.

Now, the *Hecuba* had been doing a power of thinking during all these strenuous hours. Something about her opponent vaguely recalled a dim memory, and she racked her brains in vain to try and recollect it.

Oh yes, it dawned on her after a while; she had met that ship before! But just when and where she could not remember, any more than she could put a name to her. There was a certain unpleasantness connected with this vague memory, too. What a nuisance that she was unable to recall the details, try how she might!

Then all of a sudden it came back to her, just at the very moment when Dane was making his report about ammunition.

"By jove, yes! She's the old *Hertha!* The clumsy beggar that drifted across my bows in '98 and carried away my starboard sponson! I'll sponson her now, see if I don't! This is where I get a bit of my own back!"

And with a quick leap ahead she charged at her ancient enemy and rammed her amidships. And that was the last of the *Hertha!*

Afterwards, when Jack Dane told Gillian that her father had fought his ship magnificently, she said, "I told you so! And yet you laughed at me

for calling him a hero! Now, then!" Which was just like Gillian.

And when the news reached Motherbank the old ships rocked happily with the tide, well pleased that one of their number had achieved immortal fame; for they felt that the glory was reflected on them all—all the ships of the Motherbank.

VII. What Sailors Read

OFT in the stilly night—which officially begins with "Stand-by hammocks," at 10 p.m.—have I had to walk along the mess-deck with a gait and posture decidedly unclerical to the view; it consists in bending double, with the arms hanging loosely, and the head slightly bent, so as to be able to cock an eye upwards—such a walk as our remote forefathers probably adopted in their primæval jungle, before they had adopted the erect position, at such times as a fellow anthropoid might be suspected of being about to heave down a shower of cocoanuts as a practical joke.

The reason for this undignified attitude is that there are rows after rows of recumbent sailors suspended, like Mohammed's coffin, in their canvas hammocks; which, when occupied, look from below like an endless succession of drab-coloured Zeppelins—only, in this case, one has to be careful to try not to disturb the occupants.

Reaching the end of the row of hammocks, and straightening up with relief in my mind and a crick in my back, I have sometimes looked back over the

top of the line and noticed that a large proportion of the men are not asleep, but reading.

Reading in bed is certainly very pleasant, the more so in that it is supposed to be bad for you, which, of course, makes it very attractive ; but the charm of books must be very great to induce a man to read in his hammock. The face of the reader is within a foot or so of the deck above, to which are attached the " police-lights "—electric lamps with stout glass and wire shields ; so that a man must read with either a hot glare right against his face or else in semi-darkness. In spite of these disadvantages sailors appear to derive a good deal of pleasure from hammock-reading.

And what sort of literature is it that holds out such a lure ? None of your Merediths, Conrads, or R. L. Stevensons ; not a single novel of the type described with unfailing regularity each week in the publishers' advertisements as " epoch-making " and " worthy to be ranked amongst the classics " —though a few of such literary masterpieces, finding in a sevenpenny edition an escape from the oblivion which overtakes the vast majority of their fellows, do sometimes get read by the sailor. But, for the most part, the books he reads are of another type ; or rather of two other types—the Deadwood Dick and the Heart's-Whisper Novelette Library.

If you were to grope your way between the hammocks of a night and request the first sailor you observed reading to let you look at his book for a moment—a request which he would immediately grant with great courtesy—you would probably

find the volume's title to be, " With Bludgeon and Bowie-knife Through Bolivia " ; while his neighbour would at the same time be eagerly devouring the thrilling pages of " Her Secret Sin " (by the Author of " Passion's Purple Throbs ").

There is also another type of story, very popular amongst the younger members ; it is a semi-serial, that is to say, it appears in the form of a Complete Story Each Week, yet deals always with the same characters—the boys of an imaginary public school. The dialogue in these stories is very thrilling, and holds the reader with a magnet's force. Here is a typical specimen of it :

" Wow ! " cried Billy Bunter, " Goo ! Yarp ! "
" Biff ! Bang ! "
" Wee ! It hurts ! Leggo ! "
" Hoosh ! Bim ! Barroo ! "
" Tally-ho ! Yoicks ! "
" Ha ! " exclaimed the doctor, entering at this instant.

This, you must understand, is not exactly a direct quotation, but I think I have caught something of the spirit of the thing. It makes very good reading—but it must be very much more interesting still to write it !

Ascending the scale somewhat, we come to a class of readers who delight in " Freckles " and " The Rosary," and the prolific output of Charles Garvice. References to these works and quotations from them frequently appear in the letters of their

admirers; and if the authors only knew what a devoted following they have in the Navy I think they would be very proud indeed.

All these books, and the magazines and picture-papers which share their popularity on the lower-deck, are, of course, bought by the men themselves, or sent to them by their friends; though more than once a munificent donor has sent large cases full of popular books to be distributed, and very welcome they were in the dark winter. But the Navy itself also provides a library of fiction for the men. In this ship it runs to about six hundred volumes. They cover a wide range and are very judiciously selected. These, too, are much read by the men.

That is the trouble with most collections of books chosen for you by other people. They select what they think you ought to read, rather than what you yourself want to read. From the selectors' point of view this may be very regrettable; yet there is an opposite standpoint:

"The best method of guarding against the danger of reading what is useless is to read only what is interesting . . . I am deliberately of opinion that it is the pleasures and not the profits, spiritual or temporal, of literature, which most require to be preached in the ear of the ordinary reader."

And since these are the words of a former First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. A. J. Balfour, who shall blame the sailor for following such counsels?

VIII. Getting Back from Leave

THE rearrangement of the train service was responsible, I suppose, for the confusion. The Sergeant-Major of Marines explained to me that he was bringing a party of his men from Forton Barracks to join the fleet, and had arranged accommodation for them; but two other parties of men, from Chatham and Eastney, also turned up unexpectedly at the station and boarded the train. Consequently we were more than a little crowded.

The Sergeant-Major had looked after his men to the best of his ability; though there is no need at all for me to say this, since in the Royal Marines everyone looks after those below him in rank like a father or an elder brother. He had brought two of his party into our first-class carriage—two fine-built specimens of young manhood they were, too. The larger of the two had an expansive smile, and a communicative disposition. It was not many minutes before he informed us with a very broad grin, "When I first tried to jine up, the doctor told me I 'ad 'eart-disease—*'eart-disease!*" That obviously tickled him as one of the best jokes

he had ever heard; but there was a better one to follow: "So I went across to the Fleet-Surgeon at Pompey an' 'e didn' say nothin' about no 'eart-disease!" His chum on the opposite seat grinned responsively; so did we all.

Apparently the diagnosis of the Fleet-Surgeon at Pompey must have been the correct one; for, as the marine proceeded to tell us: "Me and my chum there was in that Somme affair; lor, that was the worst turn-out I was ever in! I came out of it all of a tremble, just like this"—he waggled his curved hands to demonstrate the idea. But I do not think that anybody who could go through that Somme turn-out could have a very bad heart, though a little tremble might be very well excused.

He then proceeded to write a letter. That is to say, he went so far as to produce from his cap a short stump of a pencil, and inquired whether there was any station where he could get out and purchase a post-card.

The Sergeant-Major at once produced from his bag some paper, envelopes, and stamps, together with a long new pencil, which he suggested might be better than the stump.

The private thanked him, and started to spread out a sheet of paper on the flat top of his cap. But this was not enough for the Sergeant-Major, who at once handed over to him the book he was reading. I was delighted to see that this was no other than "Pickwick."

"Ah!" said its owner, in answer to a comment

of mine, "I generally keep a book of Dickens's by me—that and Shakespeare."

I had hardly expected that a long railway journey would be made pleasurable by meeting such a one as this—a worthy candidate for the D.C.M. (Dickens Companionship Medal).

Meanwhile I had become aware of a stirring and a noise in the corridor. We discovered that some marines of one of the other parties had found no seating accommodation, and had proceeded, after the ordinary fashion of the Royal Marines, to make the best of things; to that end they had stretched out in the corridor, where they lay packed like sardines. We soon had two of them in our only vacant seats, and those who still lay outside had, at any rate, a little more room.

Our communicative friend was still talking to his chum. The discourse related to one Gurney, and was a little broken by the noise and jolting of the train, but the gist of the story was easy to gather—and worth remembering. "'Twas the bravest thing I ever saw in my life," said our friend. "There was me an' 'im"—nodding towards his chum—"an' Gurney, and an orfcer. We was in our dug-out, w'en down comes a German shell an' arf buries us. Gurney was up in a moment. 'I mus' get out an' mend the wire,' 'e says. 'Twas his job to look after the telephone, you know, repair the wires, an' all that. 'You mus'n't do it,' says the orfcer, 'tis certain death to get out now. I won't allow you to do anything o' the sort.'

"'Can't 'elp fer that, sir,' says Gurney, 'tis my duty!'."

"'Wait a minute while I jus' take a peep out over the top,' the orfcer says; but soon as 'e got his 'ead turned, Gurney nips out with 'is repairin' tools!"

There was a slight pause before the story continued.

"We was relieved after a while by the ——s. They come along, an' one of 'em says, 'There's a corpril o' yours a-lyin' dead out there.' Well, we didn't follow what he was drivin' at, not at first. O' course, we don't 'ave corprils, we 'ave bombardiers. But we went to look, all the same. 'Twas poor Gurney we found."

I changed trains soon after this, and, curiously enough, heard another fellow-traveller quote "the bravest thing I ever saw in my life." This time, however, it was a tribute to the enemy. "We were away back, a good way behind the firing line," the speaker narrated, "and all of us just standing about anyhow, when a Hun aeroplane came right over our lines. It's not many of them dare to do that now. This chap, however, was a plucky one. He came right towards us, and dived down to within *thirty yards* of our party, and let loose at us with his machine-gun. Of course, we let rip at him with rifle fire, some of us, but we were too much taken aback to make anything like good shooting; I dare say we put one or two holes through his planes, but that was all, while he was up and off again before you could say 'knife'! Yes, he was a sporting fellow, that chap!"

I asked if he got back to his own lines. It was a silly question, because, of course, that could not be seen. But, Hun or no Hun, I hope he did. And, what is more, the teller of the story was obviously of the same mind.

IX. *Gain.*

I.

"WHAT have we gained?" is the Pessimist's cry,
Sadly reviewing the months gone by.
"Firm in the West the foe remains,
While his hordes over-run the Russian plains;
Not ours, but his, are the real gains!
And what of our promised great advance
To drive the enemy out of France?
And what of our fleet,
Is it still in retreat?
Where is its boasted mighty feat
Of digging the rats from out of their holes?
But day by day,
Loud in our ears the death-bell tolls,
Bidding a prayer for the stricken souls
Of men who are vainly thrown away!
Waste and riot on every side,
Mourning and poverty far and wide!
And, after these long-drawn years of war,
No nearer the end than we were before!"

II.

What have we gained ? On the Seven Seas
Not one German flag now taints the breeze ;
And where it flew in its pride before,
Casting its shade on the distant shore,
It is lowered now for evermore !
Shrunken is Germany's Place in the Sun,
Gone are her colonies, one by one !
And her armies vast
Are melting so fast,
The end of them all is in sight at last.
But there arises on every hand
An avenging host
Daily increasing as each new land
Eagerly, proudly, takes its stand
To put an end to the shameless boast !
And France has strengthened her steel-clad line
To fling the invader across the Rhine ;
While Russia yields the enemy room,
Luring him on to his final doom !

III.

What have we gained ? A nation's soul
Made strong and healthy and clean and whole !
Now from her idols of sport and greed
England, our England, at last is freed.
That is our gain, and a gain indeed !
Duty, loyalty, honour, and truth,
These are the gains of our English youth !

Yet there is more—
Add to the score
An Empire never so strong before ;
All its dissensions put to flight,
And in their place
One firm resolve to uphold the right,
One fixed intent to show the might
Of a united British Race !
What have we gained ? The whole world's praise,
Friendship, and trust, as it stands at gaze,
Watching and waiting the glorious end,
This have we gained : the World for our Friend !

X. *Braid*

THE other day I was reading, not for the first time, the "Religio Medici," and was much struck by the following passage: "*United souls are not satisfied with embraces, but desire to be truly each other; which being impossible, their desires are infinite, and proceed without a possibility of satisfaction.*"

Now that is a thing which I have often tried to say myself; but could never have put it so neatly and convincingly. I owe therefore to good old Sir Thomas Browne the same tribute as an agricultural labourer once paid to Shakespeare: "He do seem to have the gift of expressing all my own thoughts in such a wunnerful manner"! Which, by the way, might well serve as the criterion of genius in any writer. And, for another "by the way," I do not remember that Shakespeare has anywhere expressed this particular thought—it is one of the very few which he omitted to mention.

But another poet hit upon it—will somebody please explain how it is that you may go on for years not knowing some particular fact or allusion

or face or idea, but when once you have made the discovery you are bound to run up against it a dozen times in the course of the next few days? Scarcely had the "Religio" crystallised the idea for me when I opened Rupert Brooke's pages and read:

> "Mamua, there waits a land
> Hard for us to understand.
> Out of time, beyond the sun
> All are one in Paradise,
> You and Pupure are one,
> And Taü, and the ungainly wise."

With much more to the same effect, too long for quoting. The poet, you observe, forecasts as a fact that which the doctor-divine lamented as an impossibility; and, were it not that you can drag isolated texts of Scripture into proving anything, there would be a strong temptation to adduce certain texts to support the thesis; the thesis, I mean, that the final consummation of all things will be a state in which each soul, while preserving his individual personality, will be identified and unified with every other living soul; and all made one with God. Possibly we are intended to deduce this from the Doctrine of the Trinity; at any rate, such an assumption does at least add a human interest to a doctrine which has always seemed to myself to possess the least "personal application" of the foundations of the Christian Religion.

No, these are *not* "Notes for my Trinity Sermon,"

but merely some reflections induced by looking at the three rows of white braid which edge the sailor's blue collar, and by thinking what a splendid field lies open to the thorough-paced Ritualist in a man-of-war. So many things here have their spiritual significance, not always open to the eyes of the uninstructed. The most obvious example, of course, is afforded by those same three rows of white braid, typifying, so it is said, Nelson's three most famous victories. There are those, it should be added, who deny that there is any such significance in the braid, and state that it was worn on the collar before Nelson's time. But what of that ? Even if such a view is correct—and I am not enough of a Naval historian to be able to decide the point—the Navy of to-day universally believes in the symbolism ; and are not albs, rochets, chasubles, dalmatics *et hoc genus omne* simply apparel anciently in common use to which pious tradition has added a symbolical meaning ?

It is noteworthy that the Germans, in their flattering attempts to imitate everything British in naval matters, have even gone so far as to copy these same rows of braid. There is much humour in their unconsciously celebrating British naval victories ; or have they, perhaps, adopted Nelson as well as Shakespeare ?

XI. *The Argument.*

CERTAIN branches of the Naval Service are officially known as "non-combatant," and of these the Accountant or Paymaster branch is one. But in H.M.S. ——, a super-Dreadnought of one of the premier Battle Squadrons, the Fleet Paymaster, if not combatant, was certainly the most combative officer in the whole mess. He almost out-Hunned the Huns in his fierce desire for ruthlessness and frightfulness. Where men of a milder savagery would devise fitting punishments for the Kaiser, varying from St. Helena to a rope's end, he would invent far more drastic methods of treatment, and was for applying them to the entire Teutonic race.

His combativeness was never more keenly displayed than in an argument; to argue with an opponent worthy of his steel was his chief relaxation from the toils of his official occupation. Any subject suited him, but if he could pick and choose, he liked best to argue on the chances of the High Seas Fleet coming out to give battle to our own.

Unfortunately, his messmates were a weak-kneed, limp-backed lot in respect of arguing; and as for the Fleet Paymaster's pet subject of debate, they were all thoroughly tired of the question. Their point of view was that if the German Fleet chose to come out, our ships were ready for it; but in the meantime there were plenty of other things to think about—the question of when the next leave was coming being one of the chief.

The Fleet Paymaster's quality as a master of debate seemed doomed to rust in idleness amongst such unenterprising messmates. But Fate, taking pity on him, arranged a reshuffling of the medical branch and sent to the —— a certain Fleet Surgeon, a man to whom an argument was even more the very breath of life than it was to the Fleet Paymaster.

And by a singular coincidence the Fleet Surgeon's pet argument was exactly the same as that of the Fleet Paymaster.

But whereas the man of figures thought it was obvious to the meanest intelligence that the German Fleet must emerge and fight a pitched battle, the man of healing considered it pitiable that anyone could be found so devoid of all powers of reasoning as to believe for a single instant that such an affair could ever happen.

Under these circumstances it was only natural that the two officers should seek each other's company almost continually. Love at first sight is a tame and colourless phenomenon compared to

the way in which the Fleet Paymaster and the Fleet Surgeon warmed to each other on the very first day of their acquaintance. They became bosom enemies, and were rarely seen apart.

On the settees around the fire in the ward-room, after lunch, they would settle down in friendly fashion—Damon and Pythias, David and Jonathan, or any other classic pair of friends were on distant speaking terms compared with these two cronies—and would then proceed to enjoy themselves with a no-quarter contest of rancour and acrimony.

"Can't you see," the Paymaster used to say, "that they must come out? It is mere obstinate idiocy to take any other view! They would be shamed for ever in their own eyes and in the eyes of Germany if they didn't put up a fight! They will have to do it. Whatever else the Germans may be, they certainly are not cowards."

"No," came the riposte of the Fleet Surgeon, "and they are not fools either. What would you say to a boxer of the bantam class who would deliberately challenge a heavy-weight to a knock-out fight? You would say he was a silly ass. So he would be. And so would the German Fleet be, to take on a fleet of three times its own fighting strength. They will never come out!"

And so it would continue, *ad infinitum*. Did they go ashore for a walk or a game of golf, they never got away from their one subject of discussion. It is said that on one occasion sixteen players, including the fleet champion, were held up at the twelfth hole for half an hour while these

two forgot their game to wrangle about the German Fleet.

Even when on duty they could not entirely forgo their favourite pastime. True, their duties lay widely apart, and it was fortunate that the Sick Bay and the Ship's Office were at opposite ends of the ship. But there were times when an official task brought the two friends together. For instance, at General Quarters, or when practising Action Stations. The Fleet Paymaster had volunteered to act as an assistant to the medical staff, and had zealously qualified in first aid to that end. There were several medical action stations in the ship, but needless to say the Fleet Surgeon would suffer no one but himself to enjoy the assistance and the company of the Fleet Paymaster.

Deep down in one of the flats, behind armour, and surrounded by all the horrid appurtenances of the surgical craft, the two would sit for an hour and a half every time that the call for "Action Stations" was sounded; but the time seemed all too short to them.

Now the —— was rather fond of going to Action Stations. Every ship has its own particular hobby. With some it is Divisions, with others aiming-rifle practice, or painting out the mess-deck. But the —— counted it a bad week if she had not been to Action Stations at least four times. So the pair frequently foregathered and combined business with pleasure.

On one such occasion they were immersed

even more deeply than usual in profound debate. The ship was at sea, which perhaps accounted for the intense energy they put into the discussion, since neither of them had ever quite got over the unpleasant habit of being seasick, and consequently they were both a little liverish.

The Fleet Paymaster said his say, making use of every imaginable appeal to persuade the Fleet Surgeon to abandon what he termed his "absurd and illogical position." And the Fleet Surgeon retorted that while he admitted it took all sorts to make a world, what beat him was how anyone could be so utterly childish as to imagine that the Germans were ever coming out!

The hatch above opened noisily, and a voice shouted down something in an excited tone. Among the sick-berth staff in the flat and their amateur helpers, musicians, domestics, and writers, a buzz of eager conversation ensued. Some of them crowded towards the foot of the iron ladder leading up to the deck above, and called after the man who had shouted down to them. But he was gone and out of hearing. They returned to their posts, and again chattered excitedly.

All this, however, was lost to the arguing pair, deaf to all voices but their own.

"Well, you see!" exclaimed the Fleet Paymaster. "Only wait, and you will see right enough!"

"Yes, 'wait and see,'" sneered the other. "Is that the most original thing you can find to say?"

"Sir," interrupted the sick-berth steward, approaching him, "have you heard ——"

"What's that? What's that? Yes—no. Anything you want? All the men are present here, aren't they?"

"Yes, sir, but ——"

"Very well, then, go away—can't you see I'm busy?"

"But, sir ——"

Whatever it was that he wanted to say, he got no further with it. The Fleet Surgeon turned his back on him and faced the Fleet Paymaster once more.

"If the war ends without a fleet action, I'll eat my hat!" cried the latter.

"If ever such an impossible thing happens, I'll eat my hat and my boots as well!" retorted the other.

"There *must* be one!"

"There *won't* be one!"

"Sir!" cried the sick-berth steward, making yet another attempt. But the Fleet Surgeon was delivering himself of what was perhaps his record effort.

"Not only is the idea of a naval battle ridiculous," he declaimed, "it is beyond the range of all ideas that need be taken into practical account. It is more than improbable, it is utterly and entirely impossible. We have been at war now for nearly two years, and yet there has been no battle. If it continues a hundred years more I grant you there may be one: circumstances may

have changed by that time. But as things are now, a naval action on a large scale is just about as unlikely as—as——" He did not finish the sentence.

At that moment a terrific concussion shook the huge vessel. She had fired a salvo from her big guns. Almost simultaneously another concussion was heard—and felt.

It was the beginning of the greatest sea-fight the world had ever seen—the day of the Jutland Battle.

* * * * * *

I came upon the two friends ashore one day recently, and heard them as I overtook them.

"But they never *meant* to meet us," the Fleet Surgeon was saying. "That was quite unintentional on their part, so it doesn't affect the question at all!"

So then the great argument was still continuing! And, for all I know, it continues to this day.

XII. Notes for My Christmas Sermon

ONE of our officers said to me the other day: "Whatever you do, Padre, for Heaven's sake don't have that hymn about *Peace on Earth.*" But I shall—why not? And shall preach about it, too, if I feel inclined. Only objection, all that can be said is rather too obvious. Might work in that the correct translation is not "*good-will towards men,*" but "*to men of good-will.*" But said this last Christmas. Besides, plenty of men of good-will are now denied peace, if peace means cessation of war.

Could argue that if a large war gives the lie to Christ's Peace, then a small war might equally do so; and if a small war, then a quarrel between two men—or any evil which exists contrary to God's plans for the world's contentment—*e.g.*, a cut finger or a cold in the head. If evil is evil, then, no matter on what large or small scale it is found, we ought never to preach peace and good-will if we may not during this war. (Waste of time to labour this point.) "*My Kingdom is not of this world.*" True inward peace compatible with outward strife. Madame Somebody

—French Revolution—imprisoned—"*My heart is like a bird in a cage, I am singing praises to God all the day long.*" (Can't verify the reference: better quote John Bunyan in prison; better still, Christ on Cross had perfect peace.) Plenty of modern instances showing how war brings out Christian virtues, and is really a great Revival Meeting. Read in a newspaper, visit of M.P. to the front; said he had seen more Christianity in half an hour there than in all his lifetime before. Also, testimony of someone else, to the effect that if a man has never thought of God and the Hereafter, he will certainly do so before being a week in the trenches.

Don't altogether care about this: obvious retort of long-suffering congregation, "*Then you consider Religion as a thing entirely apart from ordinary affairs.*" Can quite see that if this "inward peace" theory were carried to logical conclusion I might be asked whether two men fighting a duel could both have Christ's true peace inwardly. Getting dangerously near the idea of "Religion for Sundays and do as you please on week-days."

Inward peace all very well for those who achieve it; but it doesn't prevent existence of untold miseries and unnumbered horrors.

No. Having taken as my theme for years that true religion (1) must not stop short at personal edification, and (2) is of no earthly use unless it affects every department of life, I am not going to try to argue that all is as it should be by alleging

the cases of certain individuals enjoying mental peace in the midst of ghastly world-wreckage.

Christ's Kingdom *is* a spiritual Kingdom, and there *is* a peace independent of outward circumstances; but to say more than that *Good comes out of evil* is not honest—so far as concerns the War: otherwise, let us have a dreadful war always!

How about pointing out that Peace may be just as disastrous and evil in reality as War? Apposite quotation from Tennyson—trite, but probably new to my congregation. Can't say I care about this idea much; savours more of an essay than of a sermon.

So do all the above-noted ideas, in fact. Essay-sermons are all very well in their way, but the best kind of sermon is the one which gives the congregation something to *do* rather than to *think about*.

Why not get away from this "Peace on Earth" business, and strike a completely different note? Christ born this day—for what? For a life of self-sacrifice and suffering, for an unselfish death, "*leaving us an example.*" Human sufferings ennobled and glorified by Incarnation.

With this, also, Christus Consolator:

> "*The Christ-Child came indeed to give us glee,*
> *But for the mourners was the Saviour born.*"

First part of this would do, but the other not so well, not very many of my sailors are mourners. Must be careful to suit remarks to hearers; avoid example of theological student who preached trial

sermon before a committee of two bishops, and began, "*I will divide my hearers into two classes—the converted and the unconverted.*"

Still feel that I want to get back to the "Peace on Earth" question—more especially having been sort of "dared" to it.

I think the proper line to take is that we and our Allies are *fighting for Christ's Peace.* If ever there was a war in which a sharp division could be made between the forces of Good and the forces of Evil, this is one.

Warn my hearers solemnly against the devilish attitude of the wilfully ignorant—peace-cranks and others—who say, "*Ah, well, there are faults on both sides! Why can't you all stop squabbling and behave yourselves?*" These people would want to persuade Saint Michael and the Dragon to shake hands and be friends. This spirit is the very one we are fighting against—the spirit which recognises no moral distinctions, and accounts for all actions by base motives of self-interest. We are fighting against a deliberately calculated attempt to drive out of the world all those virtues and ideals which Christ came to teach. If not, there is no sense nor reason in any human actions, and never has been, but all things are just happenings in an idiot's nightmare.

A parallel to be worked up a little: the wholesale destruction now witnessed does not prove that this war is subversive of Christianity; as well accuse a Government of cruelty to animals when it destroys rats to stamp out bubonic plague.

The contest between Light and Darkness is not a competition, but a tooth-and-nail fight, and terrible things must be endured while it lasts.

Obvious text, from Christmas-morning Psalms: "Ride on, because of the word of *truth*, of *meekness*, and *righteousness*, and thy right hand shall teach thee *terrible things*."

Something to *do* in this sermon; the "personal application" is that every one of us is a *traitor to his own cause* if he does not "fight manfully under Christ's banner against Sin, the World, and the Devil."

Or shall I let all this go by the board—the War, and Peace, explanations of difficulties, and the battle between Right and Wrong—and just try as well as in me lies to bring before the men the Son of Man and let Him speak for Himself?

Here, my brothers, is the World's Desire. King of Nations, Friend of Sinners, Fairest flower that ever sprang from earth, brightest star that ever shone in Heaven: perfect God and perfect Man. Human sufferer, divine consoler, who of His own will took our flesh and was born as on this day for us. This Man is what we all want, though we do not know it, and our heart can find no rest until it rests in Him.

What I should like to make is that which they call on the Continent a rhapsody—or is it a eulogy? It is a form of sermon that has always appealed to me, and I think we miss much by not adopting it in our English Church.

But, after all, what does it matter what we

preach about on Christmas Day, or at any other time? We cannot give out anything that is not within us; and that which is in us is bound to come out, independently of what words we may use. We fondly imagine that our congregations listen to what we *say;* they do not—they listen to what we *are.*

XIII. The Vigil

NOT ours the glory of the battle din,
Not ours to play high stakes with fame and fate,
And sing the triumph-song of those that win—
Not yet! Not yet! We only watch and wait.

We watch and wait; ready our part to play,
Whene'er the foe may choose. We do but ask
A meeting—let *him* fix the place and day;
If not, still hold we to our ceaseless task—

Content to do it; though we sweep in vain
The wide North Sea and find no ship in sight,
No answer to our challenge on the main,
'Tis not our choice. Yet can we wait. Or fight.

But if the glory is not ours to share
With those our brothers in the distant field,
This lustre-lacking burden that we bear
Still hath a useful harvesting to yield.

We keep the foeman from our English shore
Which now his bloodstained foot dares not defile;
We fill the children's mouths—why ask we more?
To safeguard England—is not this worth while?

XIV. Colour

CLASSICAL scholars inform us that the ancient Greeks had no word to denote with precision the colour blue, and that the word so frequently used in Homer to describe the sea ought not to be translated "blue," but "steely."

Which just shows what a silly thing classical scholarship is! For there was many a blue-eyed maid in ancient Greece, and I rather think that any Demetrius who told his Helena her eyes were "steely" would have had a pretty thin time!

Up in these far northern latitudes, however, the sea assumes at times a hue to which the epithet "steely" is the only one appropriate. Of a winter's evening, during the short period between sunset and dark, a weirdly beautiful essay in the picturesque is nightly sketched by Nature, to be blotted out in a few minutes as though the effort were not so perfect as it might be; and, indeed, each night it seems better than before.

Outline plays no part in it; colour alone is used to produce the lovely effect. And what colour!

The dusk is every moment deepening. Yet it is not too dark to see ships distant a mile or more; though dim enough to soften the harsh outlines of those which are quite near. It is now that the sea becomes like steel, the vivid metallic steel of a watch-spring, though lacking the hardness of that tint. Owing to some atmospherical cause which I cannot explain it is far lighter than the sky above it. That is of a deep indigo, inexpressibly soft and unfathomable; and in the West, low down on the horizon, it is rent by long gashes of flaming red—rose, orange, brick, vermilion. In the midst of all this a ship will sometimes switch a search-light on another at a distance, transforming it into a luminous ghost-ship, and this intrusion of art, instead of detracting from the natural beauty, lends aid to make a scene so lovely fair that the sense aches at it.

Of course the utter stillness helps to render more perfect the wonder of all this colour display; for scenes in half-tone seem to demand silence and stillness, whereas bright colours demand noise and movement, and that is why even the best painted pictures of Eastern life sometimes fail to be convincing, while—just stopped in time! I very nearly caught myself out saying a good word for the cinema!

Colour is by no means a thing which sailors can afford to neglect and leave to shore-going artists; it plays a very important part in the seaman's polity. Witness the "Admiralty Grey," substituted some few years ago for the picturesque

colour-scheme that used to make the ships of the Queen's Navee things of beauty. Many a sigh has been heaved by retired naval men in regret for the days when ships *were* good to look upon! The hull was black in those far-off times, with a dark red water-line; the upper works were white, and the masts and funnels yellow. But, pleasing to the eye as this combination of colours undoubtedly was, it nevertheless was considered too conspicuous and apt to reveal the presence of the ship to an enemy. So the war-paint of dark grey was introduced, most other navies having already adopted some such uniform colour. The Germans chose a light grey, the Austrians a dark green, and the French, most like ourselves, preferred a tint between grey and blue.

Protective colouring was, of course, the idea at the back of all these innovations; an idea which I can remember carried to extreme, not to say comical, lengths in various experiments. Or is it a mere naval nightmare that brings up before my fancy's eye weird ships with sides resembling a zebra's hide, and funnels painted to look like peppermint sticks? There were others, if I am not deceived, covered with promiscuous daubs and splashes, as though a futurist had been having a perfectly splendid time.

These little systems had their day; they had their day and ceased to be; and, in spite of many learned theories dragging in leaf-insects and the white bellies of antelopes to their support, the one plain fact remains that the conspicuousness of a

ship at sea depends almost entirely upon the angles of light and of vision; colours which are almost invisible under some circumstances will, under others, stand out with intense clearness; and there is no colour which is not protective at times.

This being the case, why not introduce a pleasing variety in the Fleet by letting each ship have a free hand with regard to colour? It would be very majestical to have our great galleons a flashing assemblage of tawny and gold, rich green, and royal blue. And so helpful from a mental and moral point of view, if there is anything in the theory, so much to the fore recently, that colour has a pronounced effect upon temperament! As a humble follower in this line I have put orange-coloured lamp-shades in my own cabin, as that hue is said to induce cheerfulness; but I regret to state that the mess-committee have chosen red shades for the ante-room, in whose rays envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness are said to flourish—though I am bound to say things have not turned out that way up to the present!

XV. Training

THE Major of Marines was in his cabin when I went to take him for a walk on the Quarter-Deck. On the table in front of him was spread out a motoring map of Hampshire, and he was poring over this with close attention. Had there been any prospect of Leave in the near future I might have been in doubt whether he was not planning for himself an agreeable motor tour; but since that was out of the question, I knew at once what our scientific soldier-man was doing.

"Hullo," I said, "entrenching the whole of the South Coast?"

"Not quite that," he replied, "not at present, at least; just now I'm trying to prevent a junction of two enemy forces which have landed, one *here* and the other *there!*"

"I hope you have managed it," I inquired anxiously.

"The real trouble is," said the Major, "that I cannot get an enemy sufficiently intelligent to compete with my schemes."

I suppose the world's greatest generals must

have spent years in such studies; cultivating the map-sense, until the real surface of an entirely strange country conveys to the brain merely the impression of just one more map very like hundreds of other carefully studied maps; fighting over old campaigns, and inventing new ones. And when a Military Genius finally emerges, people ignore the fact that nine-tenths of his power comes from the drudgery of study and practising and training.

I said as much to the Major during our Quarter-Deck walk and wondered if there were, in any sphere of life, exceptions to the rule that genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains.

He thought there was none; and was for applying the rule even to those dazzling stars whom it seems almost sacrilegious to suspect of having been obliged to work for their brilliancy. Shakespeare, he suggested, probably wrote an awful lot of tosh for private theatricals and for the strolling players of barns and country fairs before he acquired the knack of writing masterpieces.

I wonder if this were the case, really? If so, what a good thing it is that none of such practice-work remains for the mockery of detractors!

This much at any rate is true, that the rule applies with unflinching strictness to the world's greatest Admirals; those of the present day as well as those of the past. It seems such a simple thing to be a great naval commander. Probably there are many people who feel that, given the

opportunity, they could fill to perfection the rôle either of the dashing, cut-and-slash hero or of the silent, shrewd calculator, according to their own individual taste.

A certain versatile politician was once unkindly twitted with feeling himself quite capable of commanding the Channel Fleet; but many others, equally ignorant of the sea, have no doubt shared the feeling.

Why, it takes years of study and training to make even an efficient Able Seaman! The Jolly Tar whom you meet in the street and admire for his rolling gait and his breezy air has spent many a studious hour in technical training, wrinkling his brow and puzzling his brains over deep matters which he simply must learn before he can claim to call himself a sailor.

The ship that went into action, blazing and banging away heartily at the enemy, was the day before—*and* the day after—little more than a huge school.

Down in a flat right aft I watched this morning a class of "young gentlemen"—to use the old official term for midshipmen; they were being instructed in signals; and their teacher was, not a gold-laced officer, but a bluejacket. Arranged in view of the class was a model of a ship's masts and yards, with little metal hooks at close intervals everywhere. Upon these hooks the instructor was hanging a series of little painted wooden flags—fascinating toys, indeed! Then the midshipmen themselves, in their turn, hooked on flags to repre-

sent signals dictated to them, and their mistakes were criticised and corrected.

Perhaps at some future date one of these young officers may be the Flag-Commander who saves the day by what people will term his " instinctive " quickness in reading signals !

Further forward, in a hot, electric-lighted den of two yards square, dignified by the name of the " Armament-Office," I came upon the Gunnery-Lieutenant bending over a large sheet of squared paper upon which was written a confusing mass of dots and lines, letters and figures. He said that this cursed paper-work would break his heart one of these days ; and, further, that he had used up four flaming jars of ink in the last week in compiling reports. A couple of hours later he emerged, white and headachy with working in that stuffy hole. Will anyone think of this, when his guns shoot with marvellous precision on the day of reckoning ?

Yes, it is Training, right through ; constant study and continual practice ; nothing else tells, in the long run. Doing the same thing over and over again until the expression " sick and tired of it " becomes a completely inadequate way of expressing the feelings ; repeating and again repeating acts and motions, though conscious of doing them perfectly, out of fear that hand or eye might fail ever so slightly were the use once dropped. This is the system under which our Navy lives and works, the Navy which popular opinion imagines to be a collection of happy-go-lucky, devil-may-care fellows

who somehow manage to " get there " by proverbial British luck and British pluck.

It is a dull reality, perhaps, but it is quite true.

Why, I even saw the Navigator working, the other day !

XVI. Omens and Prophets

LATE one night recently I lay reading in my bunk "The Fall of Robespierre," begun by Coleridge and finished (though it was not worth finishing) by Southey: "a very poor play, in which I had no great content," as Pepys might have described it had it been written in his day. (Pepys, by the way, is an author greatly favoured of naval officers, and a beneficent Admiralty supplies every large wardroom mess with his immortal Diary.)

Just before switching off the light I read the concluding words of the play, and then went to sleep happy in the possession of such an omen for the future:

> "Sublime amid the storm shall France arise,
> And like the rock amid surrounding waves
> Repel the rushing ocean.—She shall wield
> The thunderbolt of vengeance—she shall blast
> The despot's pride, and liberate the world!"

A brother naval chaplain is justly celebrated for having once begun a sermon, after giving out the text, with "These words, my brethren, are not

nearly as important as they seem at first sight." Such a remark could not be applied to the lines I have quoted, for the closer you look into them the more appropriate they appear.

We are all prone to place a sort of shame-faced belief in such chance-brought omens, even if we are not superstitious enough to go out of our way to look for them, and, of course, sailors are allowed by custom to be superstitious, so my omen may pass. It seems indicated here that I should record a superstitious practice which I believe to be purely a naval one: a wine-glass or a tumbler, rung by a chance knock, must not be allowed to continue its ringing, but must be silenced by a finger laid on the rim; otherwise a sailor will be drowned. There are those who excuse themselves, if they have not stopped the ringing note in time, with the remark that the omen is aimed at a German sailor.

This war has produced a very flourishing crop of charms, omens, prophecies, and the like, ranging from the alleged utterances of a bygone monk, with a wealth of detail concerning eagles, bears, and lions, down to—Old Moore!

"Old Moore" has a tremendous vogue amongst the men of the Lower Deck, and his reputation has greatly increased of late. I have not personally had the privilege of reading his famous almanack, but am told that in it he predicted a naval reverse which coincided with the loss of the *Aboukir*, *Cressy*, and *Hogue*. This alone should have been enough to establish Old Moore's name as a prophet of repute; but it is further said that he foretold

a great naval victory, to occur about the middle of January; and consequently, after the battle-cruiser action under Admiral Beatty, there are few sailors who would willingly back their opinion against that of Old Moore.

Some anonymous well-wisher sent me, a little while ago, a gift which, although in the form of a printed prayer, claimed a usefulness rather more far-reaching than that of printed prayers in general. It was enclosed in a tiny sewn envelope, upon which was written, "To be worn in battle, or on board ship." The prayer itself purported to have been sent by an ancient saint to a Roman Emperor, and complete protection in practically all the changes and chances of this mortal life was promised to such as should wear it and repeat its words faithfully, with a solemn threat of misfortune to those who might dare to make light of it! I may add that the prayer was devotionally worded, but utterly and entirely selfish in its spirit, containing not a single petition for those others who might be in the same danger as the wearer of the —may I be bold enough to call it so?—charm.

I once read, in a book of the "Higher Thought" type, how that the prophetic faculty could probably be attained by anyone after a little systematic practice. It is a wonder that none of the great brotherhood of flat-catchers has as yet been enterprising enough to advertise a complete course of Prophecy in twelve correspondence lessons. But, in an amateurish way, we are all prophets nowadays, especially here on board ship. And, as

with the majority of prophets without a diploma, our efforts are open to continual revision. At the beginning of the war, for instance, the sailors one and all forecasted that it would be over by Christmas. They now talk, more diffidently, about next Christmas. We have one prophet, an officer, of the opposite school, who gives the war a run of twenty years! But, then, he is a conscientious pessimist and will not willingly permit the Russians to gain a single victory or take a single prisoner.

He, however, is the exception. Most of our prophets are of the optimistic kind; as witness the sailor who writes concerning the High Seas Fleet: "If ever they *do* come out, it will be like Woolwich Arsenal playing a team from the Blind School!"

XVII. Calendars

NOW comes in the time o' the year when Calendars begin to peer, bursting their sheaths and burgeoning forth one after another as each successive post brings its annual tribute from expectant tradesmen. Every officer tries now to secure one for his cabin or his office, and a good deal of minor crime is in fashion, ingenious delinquents making all haste to be first on the spot when the mail is whacked out in order to secure a likely calendar, regardless of the address on the envelope. Navvy has already pinched the front page of my Clerical Remembrancer—but there was some excuse for him, as it contained the Times of the Moon's rising and setting for every Day in the Year; information which it is difficult to imagine can be of much use to the average parson, unless he live in a country district where the poaching is good; but for my part I sharked a tailor's calendar addressed to Navvy, so we are now quits.

One of our Warrant Officers made me a present the other day of a very interesting calendar, with plentiful and high-sounding titles. It is "The

British Imperial Calendar for 1810; or General Register of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and its Colonies"; and on an inner page it is alternatively entitled "Rider's British Merlin, Adorned with many delightful and useful Verities fitting all Capacities in the Islands of Great Britain's Monarchy. Compiled for his Country's Benefit by Cardanus Rider"—and on this page there is a curious reminder of the expedients devised to raise money for the State in "Eighteen-hundred and War-time," in the shape of a steel-impressed stamp with the legend "Duty One Shilling." Like all good calendars, it has a portion devoted to the Royal Navy, with a list of ships in commission and their captains, and another of the officers of the higher ranks. The one Admiral of the Fleet then was Sir Peter Parker; and amongst the Admirals of the Red appear Viscount Hood, Governor of Greenwich Hospital, and the Hon. William Cornwallis, "Rear-Admiral of England." My own ship's predecessor of the same name figures as a Seventy-four, commanded by one Captain R. W. Otway, who may possibly have been a descendant of the great dramatist of that name, but otherwise I do not know that he had any other pretensions to fame—except, of course, that he was Captain of the ——, which is fame enough for anybody!

There is also contained here some sound advice for each month, which if followed in the Navy might save the Admiralty the expense of keeping up the Medical Branch. For instance, that for

January reads: "Let not Blood, and use no Physic, unless there be a Necessity: Eat often, and avoid too much Sleep." In April we are enjoined that "It is now a good Time to Bleed and take Physic; abstain from much Wine, or other strong Liquors; as they will cause a ferment in your Blood, and ruin your Constitution." All readers, naval and others, please take these injunctions carefully to heart.

Those calendars which offer you a pithy or witty saying for each day or each week do not always succeed in "arriving"; mainly because such disconnected quips and conceits, though they may be appropriate to the day, may not fit in with your particular mood at the time, or appeal to your especial notions of the humorous. Most disconnected jokes suffer from this defect. Horace, you may remember, has a poem all about a man called Rex, which appears to have been written with a calamus simply shaking with laughter; the whole point of the joke being that the man's name meant King whereas in reality he wasn't a King at all, but only a mere commoner! Well, perhaps it *was* a very funny joke, in the setting of the original incident.

A kindred instance came within my purview recently. Two of our boys, both newly joined, are great chums. One of them was discovered chuckling away to himself in the throes of convulsive laughter. The reason?—"Aw, 'tis my mate Bill," laughed he; "Bill *is* a fair old caution! He's just bin an' come down from the upper deck,

and—and what do you think he says? Aw, I nearly bursted my sides when he told me! Why, he says, says he—Aw, *'ow* I did laugh!—he says: '*I've just bin watchin' the sailors smokin' their big funnels*'"! Now where exactly lies the point of this joke? Does it consist in a fancied resemblance between the sailors blowing clouds of baccy from their pipes and the ships belching smoke from their funnels? Since the essence of all wit is said to rest in forcing a congruity between things naturally incongruous, this may perhaps be the right solution; unless there is some deeper subtlety which I have not probed.

Similarly, when the philosophy of my calendar tells me on January 1st to—

> Imagine then you *are* what heretofore
> You *were*—hereafter you shall not be less—

I feel like the gentleman in the immortal Ballad of "Ferdinand and Elvira," who, being admonished that

> A Fool is bent upon a twig, but Wise men dread a Bandit,

made the mental comment—

> Which I knew was very clever, but I didn't understand it.

But of all calendars the one which appeals most to me is the Monthly Navy List, with its encouraging reminder of how I creep little by little upwards through the seniority list of Chaplains. Alas! that such leaps and bounds should have taken the place of creeping in the year that has gone, through others, more senior, falling nobly in battle!

XVIII. A Naval Holiday

"THERE are many advantages in sea-voyaging," wrote Saadi the sweet singer of Persia, "but security is not one of them." Which shows that it is quite possible for a poet to talk sense at times. Security? Why, it is not so much a question of "the dangers of the seas and the violence of the enemy"—for preservation from which things the Navy prays officially every morning at Divisions; we can say to the wind, like the jolly mariner in *The Tempest*, "Blow till thou burst thyself, if room enough"; and as for the violence of the enemy, good honest open violence is a game that two can play at; much more to our minds is the petition, "Frustrate their knavish tricks"—those Hunnish activities with which we have no desire to compete.

Security, as was well rubbed into me at school, means not safety, but freedom from care—(*Securus-a-um*, from *se* and *cura*, and be careful not to get mixed up with *securis* an axe)—and, consequently, the only *security*, in the classic sense, possible during term-time was in the rare occasion of a holiday, when freedom from care was the great

thing to be desired at that harassed period of life. How bitter I used to feel against those fatuous middle-aged people who would persist in saying that school-days are the happiest days of one's life! Even a holiday was not always all that it promised to be; there were days when——

But these sad reminiscences are sweeping down upon me as the result of a naval holiday, the description of which may perhaps be more interesting than the tale of bygone disappointments.

The naval holiday to which I refer was not of that sort proposed a few years ago, when certain simple-minded gentlemen brought forward the innocent suggestion that Britain should show her goodwill towards Germany by refraining from shipbuilding for a while—Germany, of course, to do the same. Rather like a policeman offering to leave his truncheon at home on condition that all burglars should pass their word to do the like with their crowbars and jemmics!

That naval holiday, fortunately, never eventuated; whereas the one I am about to describe was a holiday that actually took place—though I am not going to say when and where, or which ships they were that went on the jaunt. You can guess, if you like, but you will probably guess wrong; for my part, while guaranteeing the tale to be as accurate as the fire of our guns, I reserve the right to maintain the same discreet silence about mere details as about the remarks made by our gunnery lieutenant when it was all over.

There is no doubt about it, we were thoroughly

bored with being in harbour. Swinging round a buoy is all very well when you can go ashore and follow the bent of your own sweet will in any direction from fox-hunting to poodle-faking; though even these relaxations lose their interest in war time. But when there is simply nothing to go ashore for except to pick a sprig of purple heather which with a little care can be bleached and palmed off on your best girl as a genuine piece of the lucky white article—(no, I haven't done this myself, but there are others not quite so conscientious)—let me see—where am I? Oh, yes, I was saying that you can get very fed up indeed with being in harbour when there's a war on, and a day or two of it is quite enough for anybody.

Well, we had had more than a day or two of it, and were beginning to get very restless. We wanted to meet the Hun, and didn't see any sense at all in this quiet life; the thrilling excitement of aiming-rifle practice failed to arouse any enthusiasm and even the suggestion of having General Drill next Monday fell very flat!

No man alive can explain how it is that any news on board a man-of-war always comes first from either a flat-sweeper or a cook's mate or a third writer; nor by what mysterious means, telepathic or otherwise, these individuals get hold of their information; but the fact remains true that their news is generally pretty reliable.

It was so, in our case. "I had it from my servant," explained one of the lieutenants; "he says it is all over the lower deck. I don't mind betting it's true!"

"Well, I was told the same thing down in the engine-room five minutes ago," said the Chief; "funny thing, I've heard nothing officially, but if we *are* going out this afternoon you would think that I should know something about it before a second-class stoker, wouldn't you?" But the rumour was true, and we *did* streak out swiftly and silently at the very time predicted. Furthermore, the buzz also got about that we were out for a proper stunt and were likely to see something doing.

We were as happy as boys who have been given an unexpected holiday. In fact, it *was* a holiday for us, and we looked for none better.

Out from the harbour's mouth, away and onwards till the coastline grew fainter and then disappeared below the horizon. Shearing a path through the white-capped seas, on a straight course hour after hour, like hounds when the scent is strong.

Hour after hour, and still no alteration of course. Plainly some definite object, was the remark. That was enough. What do we underlings know of the plans and strategies of the higher gods, admirals, and such-like omniscients?

Yet—it is astonishing how these things get about, either the cook's mate or the flat-sweeper or the third writer again was probably the fount of knowledge—the idea grew and took form as an accepted fact that we were trying to cut off a certain portion of the enemy's fleet, and might reckon on coming up with them in about three hours' time. An electric thrill seemed to pass

through the ship; such a tonic as all the bottles in the sick-bay could not provide appeared to have been absorbed by all hands fore and aft with instantaneous effect. As for the gunnery lieutenant, he became like an entomologist who has been searching all his life for a specimen of the extremely rare Lesser Cabbage White and at last descries one hovering in the tree-tops above him. I do not know whether I have got the scientific details of this simile correct, but the principle is the same, and that is the main thing.

Presently the helm went hard over, and the ship made an eight-point turn. Did this sudden alteration of course indicate some new development? Those who were able to leave their post for a moment rushed up on deck; but nothing was to be seen of the enemy as yet.

A few minutes later the navigating officer came down from the bridge, smiling and rubbing his hands in the manner which is generally described as "gleefully."

"Aha, boys," he chortled, "you'll be going over a minefield in about twenty minutes' time; it's long odds you'll all be blown to glory! *I* shall be all right—shall just float gracefully off from the bridge when it reaches the water-level; but I'm sorry for *you!*"

"And how do you know where the enemy's mine-fields are?" we enquired sceptically.

"Oh, this is nothing to do with the enemy," he replied with airy nonchalance; "*it's one of our own mine-fields!* It makes a short cut!"

Neither in the sense of safety, nor in that of freedom from care, can there be said to be much security attached to sea-voyaging; Saadi was not far out in his remark.

And the end of our naval holiday? Well, I told you it was those spoiled and disappointing holidays of long ago that brought this one to my mind.

We just saw the tail of the Hun, that was all; and even the tail slipped away before we could grab hold of it.

True, we also spoiled his little game, but well, you should have heard what the gunnery lieutenant said! All that was left for us was to proceed back to our base, creeping unwillingly to school, so to speak, with our holiday too disgustful to look back upon. We were even glad to forget it in the inevitable task of "Coal Ship!"

XIX. The Impresario

THE renowned Mr. Jellybelly, sartorial artist of Hong Kong, whenever he had achieved a triumph in the cut and fit of a monkey-jacket, was in the habit of proudly assuring his customer that this was "a very seldom coat."

Making use of the same expressive word, I can assure you that it is a very seldom ship which does not possess a Funny Party. Indeed, the amount of talent or lack of the same in a ship's theatrical company is amongst the chief standards by which a ship takes rank amongst her squadron-mates. Did the *Monstrous* succeed in carrying away the Squadron League Cup from us this season? Well, perhaps so; but, anyhow, the show we gave on our mess-deck knocked spots off *their* feeble attempt at a theatrical turn-out.

Why, from the very day a ship commissions, while the Commander is making out the Watch and Quarter Bills and making search for the most suitable people to put in charge of a hundred and one different jobs, some enthusiast of the lower deck is at the same time making inquisition of the

ship's company with equal pertinacity to discover who may be indicated as the most promising recruits for that most important body, the ship's Theatrical Troupe.

This, you must understand, is the official title; though sometimes it alters—as, for instance, in our ship, where the members of the troupe style themselves The Perriots; and, of course, the reason for this is obvious, for elaborate costumes are not easy to procure in war-time, and everybody knows that a "perriot's" full-dress is a simple one of black, with white pom-pom buttons, or white with black ones. But, call it what they may, the troupe will always be known colloquially as the ship's Funny Party: it wouldn't matter if they were to play "Hamlet" or "Agamemnon," they would still be the Funny Party.

And it is a very great triumph to secure a man with a fleet reputation as a vocalist or knockabout artist. I have been told that some colleges have actually been known to offer a scholarship to a man with a reputation for rowing or cricket, and even to attempt to lure him from a rival foundation; of course, this must have been at Cambridge—they would never do anything like that at Oxford! But—well, it *is* rather wonderful how some ships are lucky enough to combine so much theatrical talent, isn't it?

The lower-deck enthusiast who first rakes together the members of the troupe has not much difficulty in securing volunteers. His trouble rather consists in barring out some four-fifths of

the ship's company, since the very people who couldn't make a decent living out of street-singing on a wet day are as a rule the ones who most pride themselves on their capabilities. I have observed the same thing in other walks of life, by the way.

By-and-by, when he has weeded the applicants down to something like reasonable numbers, he comes along to one of the ward-room officers requesting him to father the show as patron, general manager, organiser, censor, and producer-in-chief; he himself retiring gracefully into the position of Leading Hand. This selected officer then becomes the *real* Impresario; and generally, about a month later, bitterly anathematises the day when he took over the job.

There is, I believe, a certain portion of our Empire which has earned for itself the name of the Grave of Reputations; but I should say that the post of Impresario for a ship's company has been responsible for far more reputations blighted, careers short-circuited, and hopes dashed than ever South Africa was!

You may not know the *true* reason why the engagement between Lieutenant Dash and Miss Blank was broken off; but you would have guessed had you been behind the scenes after the representation—it was in peace time, when ladies used to come off to witness the shows. "You thundering idiot," raved Lieutenant Dash, "what in Popocatepetl induced you to sing that extra verse? You *know* I strictly told you on *no* account to do so! What the ladies will think of it, Heaven alone

knows! I expect to be sent for by the captain presently, and as for you, my lad, I hope and pray you'll get reduced to second-class for leave and conduct over it!" But the singer, one Rabbie Leys, was neither penitent nor abashed, and indeed, could only with great difficulty be kept from dashing on the boards again in response to the delighted applause of the entire ship's company.

It does not tend to make this officer popular when he assembles his merry men night after night for rehearsals in one of the flats; especially in a small ship, where it is not easy to get out of range of them. And the rest of us, having heard the "turns" until we could sing them backwards, feel it a little effort to appear delighted and surprised on the night of the performance, when it is up to us to pretend that we have never heard a single one of the songs before. But this is not all. The unfortunate Impresario's lot is made still more bitter when the Commander requires the presence of some man or other for any odd job after working hours. "Where's Lock, Armourer's mate?" "Down with the Funny Party, rehearsing, sir." "Well, then, where's Tripper, L.T.O.?" "Funny Party, sir." "What a nuisance! Well, send for Chizzle, carpenter's crew." "Funny Party, sir; you gave them permission to rehearse to-night." "I know I did; but, my sainted aunt, is the whole blessed ship's company down below rehearsing for the Funny Party?"

At the other end of the scale, the Actor-

Manager incurs the acute dislike and contempt of many a man whom he is obliged to choke off and turn down. He also acquires, incidentally, much facility in tact and diplomacy. As when, for instance, he would *like* to say: "Smith, you've got just about as musical a voice as a frog with a sore throat; the idea of your attempting to sing at all is a good deal funnier than any of the so-called comic songs on this programme; and the song you want to sing is just one of those things that made Germany think England in a state of decadence." Of course, what he *really* says is to the effect that it would be a graceful act on Smith's part to give way to some less experienced vocalists trying to make their name, whose feeble efforts would appear very flat if they had to suffer comparison with Smith.

There are many other such troubles, too; ask anyone who has done the job. It is not for nothing that the word Impresario, according to its derivation, means Undertaker; so often does the holder of the title dig his own grave and bury himself in it!

XX. A Strolling Player

CLAUDE DELAMERE was probably his *nom de théâtre*—what *we* call a Pusser's Name—yet by use and affection he had come to regard it as his proper title, and it was by this name that he was entered on the ship's books when he joined us as a Hostility Man.

Why did he elect to serve his country in the Navy rather than in the Army? I think it was undoubtedly because he felt himself cast for a nautical part on account of his experiences in the Profession; he had played gay young lieutenants all his time; in "The Geisha," in "The White Chrysanthemum," and several other musical comedies, not to mention various melodramas; and his highest ambition was to appear in "Madame Butterfly."

With all this experience behind him it was only natural that he should feel himself to be but very little removed from the Real Thing. Indeed, he never felt so completely at ease as when in naval uniform, and had learned to wear his sword gracefully, without tripping over it; in the theatre, naval officers *always* wear their swords, even in

mess undress. Several admiring young ladies, moreover, had told him that he looked exactly *like* a naval officer.

And therefore, although he joined us merely in the rôle of a bluejacket, he imagined it would be only a matter of a few days before his merits would be recognised and he would be invited to take his proper place in the after-guard.

Do not be surprised at this ; I have known many young Sick-Berth Attendants who joined the Service ignorantly believing that this was a preliminary step towards becoming Naval Surgeons ; and I have even heard of boys joining as Domestics in the belief that with good behaviour and industry they might rise, in time, to be Admirals !

Claude Delamere was not all ignorant, however. True, he lacked the mere technical knowledge which a hide-bound Service still insists upon, in its obstinate conservative fashion ; but in the more important essentials he was quite word-perfect. He gave a cheery " Yeo ho, my hearties," when first introduced to the members of his mess, at the same time hitching up his breeches with his left hand in the approved manner. What his messmates replied to him I think I had better not say. He even went so far as to cultivate the habit of chewing quids of baccy, though it was extremely distasteful to him, and his first experience of Number Ten Punishment was gained by a clever performance, unsurpassed by any regular Old Salt, of the baccy-juice squirting act—a practice which is an indispensable feature in a nautical play but

is not encouraged in his Majesty's ships, especially when exhibited on the Quarter-deck.

Delamere's vocabulary was so exceedingly naval that the sailors frequently failed to understand it. But it contained also a large admixture of terms proper to his former profession; for instance, he overcame the difficulty of remembering which side of the ship was Starboard and which was Port by considering them in the light of Prompt and O.P.—by which terms he invariably referred to them; nor could he realise the meaning of the order, "Clear lower deck; everybody aft," until he grasped its significance as "Chorus of officers, sailors, and marines, police, cooks, etc., etc., all Up Stage."

It was a great disappointment to him when he discovered that he could not become one of the Principals but must remain a Super; but being a real good fellow and full of zeal for his country he soon contented himself and settled down happily to the life of the mess-deck.

Happily, that is to say, until he came into collision with the leading seaman who ran our Funny Party. Their organiser-in-chief at this time was a certain leading seaman Footlights—I am sure he was a distant connection of the Footlights who was at Oxford with Verdant Green. A very exacting overlord, he insisted upon utter and complete obedience in the members of his company, and would brook no "business" that did not meet with his entire approval.

"Look here, you Delamere," said he on one

occasion when we were rehearsing "A Woman's Heart" (written by the Chief Armourer, who used to correspond with six girls at once, so ought to know something about his subject)—"look here, you Delamere, you may be good enough for the ordinary shore-going stage, but remember, me lad, this is a first-class battleship and you'll have the captain an' all the orfcers a-watching you! Now, the way you spoke that last bit of yours, 'twon't do, won't do at all! Do it again!"

Delamere obeyed complacently. Standing so as to face Stoker Sparebunker, who represented a beautiful maiden in tears, he flung out his hands appealingly and recited: "O Annie, remain not in that attitude of affliction! Take my hand—and, with it, my heart!"

"Quite wrong, quite wrong!" criticised Footlights.—"Why, what's the matter? How would you like it done?"—"Well, in the first place, you must come well to the front of the stage and face the haudience."

"But, hang it all," Delamere said, "I'm supposed to be speaking to the girl!"—"Never you mind that," snapped Footlights, "you've got to remember the Captain's up in the front row, and 'e wants to see your face, not the seat of your trousers!"

"Very well," assented Delamere, "I'll do as you like."

"An' you must put a little more *haction* into it," continued the stage-manager, grumbling still. "Try an' do it like me. Look 'ere!—'*O Hannie,*

remain not in that hattitood of hafflíction—(shake your 'ead solemn-like from side to side)—*take me 'and*—(business at the word '*and ;* waggle it in the hair to show what you're referrin' to); *an', with it, me 'eart.'* (Give your 'eart a good thump 'ere, for a similar reason.) *That's* wot I call *hacting,* that is ! ''

Delamere jibbed at this, however; and the resulting argument culminated in overt acts of whose unfriendly intention there could not be the slightest doubt; insomuch that Footlights was cautioned that if such a thing occurred again he would be disrated to able seaman, while Delamere was unable to speak his part at all, owing to the regrettable absence of two front teeth.

XXI. The Hairdresser

MOST men simply loathe having their hair cut, and will tell you that they would almost as soon go to a dentist, or even a photographer.

On board ship, the horrors of haircutting are magnified several diameters, owing to the absence of all those luxurious appointments and attentions which help somewhat to gild the pill, so to speak, in a proper shore-going hairdressing establishment. With us, the man who performs the dread operation is generally a horny-handed marine; or, if you prefer to patronise the rival firm in the ship, you can put yourself in the clutches of a leading stoker. The scene of the outrage is a chair in the after flat, where frequent passers-by come and make facetious remarks. Or the fearful inquisitor may get to work on you in the seclusion of your own cabin; but then your servant will not be able to be found when you want him to come and sweep up the clippings, and for several hours afterwards you will have to be content with seeing the deck of the cabin strewn with the leaves of yester-year—a truly unpleasant sight!

This explains why we postpone the shearing-time on board ship as long as we possibly can. It also explains why Lieutenant Pilkington, of H.M.S. *Hood*, decided that he would wait a day or two more before getting his hair cut, and get it done as decently and comfortably as possible on the first day of his leave, which was shortly due.

Immediately on arriving at Euston, therefore, he jumped into a taxi and drove straight to Bond Street, where the glorious magnificence and elegant refinement of a first-class barber's shop almost transformed the detested operation into a pleasure.

There was a quietness, almost a hushed sanctity, in the atmosphere of the place which made Lieutenant Pilkington feel as if he were in a church; and after the constant tumult of a noisy battleship, he felt this quite an agreeable change. The saloon seemed filled with light, real daylight, which also was another pleasant contrast to the electric light in which he had been living these many months except when actually on the upper deck, and even then the daylight was not of this clear, brilliant quality, but a mixture of mist and sleet, fog and cloud. This was different.

An attendant seized his hat and plain-clothes overcoat. Pilkington ought really to have been in uniform, but he deliberately broke the regulation, changing into plain clothes in the sleeping-car; he was proud of his uniform, of course, but—well, he had had just about enough of it for the time, thank you, and wanted to get back the feel of old times once more.

The same attendant piloted him into a chair, to which he did something in the mechanical line with a sudden click, and Pilkington was tilted quickly upwards and backwards into a position of great comfort, notwithstanding its horrible reminiscence of the act that prefaces the extraction of a tooth.

The man was bending over him deferentially. He was, so Pilkington noticed, rather an undersized individual, with an intelligent but timid-looking face. He walked with a pronounced limp; and when he spoke it was in a modest little voice—again a contrast to the seamanlike tones to which Pilkington's ear had been accustomed. Altogether, a more un-warlike person it would be hardly possible to imagine.

Unless you have experienced what it means to be isolated "somewhere in the North Sea" for many dreary months, seeing the same old faces day after day, you will scarcely realise how eager a man feels to talk to anybody and everybody, even a hairdresser, on first getting back to civilisation. So in this case, the traditional right of opening a conversation which belongs to the man of brush and scissors was snatched from him before he could get a chance, and Pilkington began:

"Fine day, eh? Quite mild down here, isn't it?"

"Very fine day indeed, sir," the barber acquiesced. "Haven't had it so mild at this season not for a long time, sir."

"Been some years at this game, I suppose, haven't you?"

"All my life practically, sir. I was 'prenticed to the hairdressing at the hage of ten, sir."

"And never had a change? Gad, it must be a pretty dull sort of life, what?"

The little barber replied with an apologetic "Hem!" after which came a slight pause, as though he meditated something he did not quite like to mention. Then, in a sudden outburst of confidence, he added:

"Oh, I had a sort of holiday, sir, recently. I was away from my work for a year. I went into the—the Navy, sir."

"Really?" said Pilkington, his interest aroused. "And how did you like that?"

"Oh, very pleasant, sir, very pleasant indeed! It made a nice little change, as you might say, though I did miss the sound of the motor buses a little at first, and the—excuse my mentioning it, sir—the girls. Not that I'm what you might call a ladies' man myself, sir. Oh, by no means! But I like to see 'em about the place. And you don't see much of 'em in the Navy, sir."

Pilkington grunted sympathetically. "That's a fact," he muttered to himself. "Then why did you join the Navy instead of the Army?" he asked.

"Well, sir, I've always had a sort of a connection with the sea. My father used to keep a whelk stall in the Old Kent Road, and one of my sisters is housemaid to an Admiral's widow."

Something more than that, hairdresser! More than that, you little, under-sized, bird-voiced Cockney with the manners of a valet! It was—though you did not know it—the Call of the Blood that sent you to the sea; the blood that has filtered down to you through generations of seamen, so that there lives not now one single Englishman who has not in his veins some trace of the heroes of old, the rovers and captains who sailed and fought and died—for England!

"Well, and what made you leave it, then?" continued Pilkington. "If you liked it so much, why didn't you stay in it?"

"The—the little affair at Jutland, sir," answered the hairdresser. "A splinter-wound in my leg, sir, I was hinvalided out—not that it's anything of an ill-convenience now it's healed, sir; I can get about very nicely, though of course not fit for a ship with so many stairs to get up and down continually."

"Oh, you were at Jutland, were you?" questioned Pilkington. "In what ship, may I ask?"

"In the *Rodney*, sir. I was one of what we call the mess-deck fire party—though of course you wouldn't understand what that means. But I managed to nip up and get a peep at what was going on, now and then."

"And what did you think of the Germans' shooting?"

"Very poor, sir, oh! very poor shooting indeed! Not that they didn't begin well, but they couldn't keep it up. Didn't seem as if they had

the nerve for it, sir. You see, they're not a nation of sailors like us; they don't really feel at home upon the sea. Anything else, sir? A small bottle of our Elixir? You're getting a little thin on top, sir, if I may say so."

"Nothing more, thanks," said Pilkington, as he got up from his chair and struggled into his overcoat. "Oh, yes! there's one thing I should like," he corrected himself, as he paid his reckoning with a substantial tip into the bargain. "I should like to shake hands with you—with *a man!*"

"By the way," he added, as he turned away from the astonished hairdresser, "I was in the next ship ahead of you at Jutland—in the old *Hood*. Good day—and good luck to you!"

XXII. Mails

REGULARITY and promptitude in the arrival of mails on board ship depend very largely on whether the skipper and the commander are married—or, better still, engaged. Provided they belong to this benedictine order, there is sure to be a boat available at all times to go to fetch the mail, and the postman is the most hustled man in the ship.

But in the reverse case mails are treated as a weak and luxurious dallying with the outer world to be discouraged and repressed as much as possible. Take our own commander, for instance; whenever I want to get my own back for his inveterate habit of choosing the snowiest and blowiest morning for prayers on the upper deck, I say to him: "Commander, what about getting a mail?" "A mail!" cries he; "a *mail!* With the first picket boat doing D.S.B., and the other one laid up, and all the pulling-boats hoisted! What you want with mails more than once a month is more than I can imagine!"—and so on, till I feel that honour is avenged. But, at the same time, I notice that he gets more letters than anybody else, and wanders

about in a distraught fashion if no mails arrive, so his attitude is no more than the correct pose of the complete executive officer.

For, of course, everybody is glad to get a mail, when living on board ship. This is true enough in peace time, but how much more so in time of war, when the arrival of the mail is one of our few distractions.

Imagine the wardroom on a dull afternoon during one of those periods when work is at a standstill and in every sense of the expression there is "nothing doing." On two of the settees and one of the arm-chairs are reposing certain officers in deepest slumber, one of whom has an annoying habit of snoring in a high falsetto; two others are reduced to playing a game of dominoes, having exhausted all other available forms of mild distraction; and yet another two are engaged in a heated argument concerning the source and origin of the Greek Church—a discussion in which the disputants are the more vehement for the reason that both of them know nothing whatever about the subject.

Enters suddenly a lieutenant who announces in the cheery tones of one who is certain of a welcome for his news: "A mail's just coming alongside!" And the scene changes at once to animated expectancy. Even the sleepers wake to inquire, with understanding and grammar both dulled by the fog of slumber, "Where's my letters?" and it has to be repeatedly explained to them that the letters are not whacked out yet; this information

being punctuated and corroborated by the thud of mail-bags being hurled down the hatchway from the upper deck.

The sorting of the mail, which is performed by one of the Ship's Corporals, proves too much for the patience of one of the more enthusiastic members of the mess; who must needs penetrate into the ship's post-office and wait while the mail is being sorted, returning at the earliest possible moment with an armful of letters and papers for the wardroom. Then he proceeds to call out the names of those lucky ones who have got a letter, interspersing his roll-call, if he be of a facetious nature, with various personalities, such as: "Smith, same graceful feminine handwriting; why don't you marry the girl and have done with it?—Brown, another dun!—Three for myself; Lord, how they all love me!—Smith again; tut tut, you Don Juan!—Fleet Surgeon, the *B.M.J.* for you; glad to see you're trying to learn your job!—Jones, here you are; looks like a moneylender's advertisement; keep clear of 'em, my boy, they'll be your ruin!"—and so on.

Mails are generally brought off to the ships by a drifter, and it is hard weather indeed that can stop these staunch little craft from their work. Many are the uses to which the lesser auxiliary vessels have been put, but none of their tasks deserves the heartfelt thanks of the fleet so much as that of bringing us our longed-for mails. It is a job which must always be dull and tedious, sometimes also not without its dangers; so here's

to the good fellows who have run the mail-drifters month after month to our unbounded satisfaction !

Little less, if at all, is the gratitude due to the ship's postman, who for some unknown reason must always be a marine. Why a bluejacket should never be told off for the job is more than I can say ; but, like many other mysteries of the Navy, it just *is* so !

XXIII. Notes for My Easter Sermon

I HAVE always found a certain difficulty about making an Easter Sermon. There can be only one possible subject, of course—Christ's resurrection and our own resurrection, and the relation between the two. Now, as to the first part of this triple subject, there are no doubts in my mind. That any sincere lovers of Christ should find it necessary to search for qualifications and subtle meanings in the plain statement of the Resurrection; that they should have difficulty in believing as a literal fact that the Spirit of Jesus (the Lord and Giver of Life) raised His dead body to life again—this to me appears a greater miracle than the Resurrection itself. We all of us have our own particular agnosticisms; but, for myself, there is no article of the Creed to which I can subscribe more whole-heartedly than "*The third day He rose again from the dead.*"

Coming to our own resurrection, however, I am full of hesitations; not doubts as to the main idea, you understand, but hesitations as to the details. Because, strange as it may seem, I do not thoroughly comprehend all the mysteries of

the Hereafter, the principal difficulty being that of differentiating between the present condition of the departed and what awaits them after the Last Judgment. I confess to a sneaking sympathy with Hymenæus and Philetus, those reprobate heretics who taught that the resurrection is passed already; for the condition of the blessed immediately after this life appears to me to be so happy that I cannot imagine any higher and happier; put it on the most spiritual basis—"*to depart and be with Christ*"—what further can Heaven offer? All that is taught concerning the "Waiting State" leaves me unsatisfied; when it is dogmatic it seems simply silly, and when it is vague it is usually also self-contradictory. Let me skim lightly over Purgatory, lest I should open the door to unprofitable controversy, and simply say that I cannot see how anyone can *really* believe that the soul of one he loves is burning in even the most metaphorical sort of flames without going raving mad at the thought. As for being "*at rest*"—that seems the very last thing that would be appropriate: if your toothache suddenly stops, you don't want to go and lay your head on a pillow; and I should imagine that a man when suddenly released from the clog of a mortal body—especially a body full of pain—would feel gloriously energetic in his new-found freedom, and say he had done with "resting" for a bit.

Moreover, the idea of an age-long sleep, lasting until the Last Day, which is one view of the "rest" theory, appears to be grounded on very slight

evidence. It finds favour with many people, and "Hymns A. and M." caters for them by supplying certain hymns such as "Leave we now Thy servant sleeping," though it also, quite impartially, permits us to sing about "the soul in contemplation" uttering earnest prayer, and being engaged in this until the Resurrection, and, further, has hymns also for such as take the view which seems to me the most scriptural, and conceive of the departed as permitted "to be where Jesus is, to feel, to see Him near."

Then, when one has become lost in the mazes of professional theologians, a host of empirical theorists appear, ready to explain the next world with such minute plainness that one would almost think they had been there—as, indeed, some of them actually profess to have been.

I must confess that the ideas on this subject of some of the Spiritualists—there are so many different kinds !—appeal to me as being eminently probable, though not provable ; while the methods and arguments by which they arrive at their conclusions are, to my mind, supremely contemptible, the conclusions themselves are too good to be anything but true.

Perhaps after all, those ideas are the soundest which rest on no other foundation than their own inherent reasonableness, not buttressed up by pile of facts and arguments : the poet is always a surer guide than the logician.

An infinitely widened life—that is the main idea. A life without the limitations suffered by us here.

The human eye is not, properly considered, an instrument of vision; it is an instrument for the restriction of vision within an exceedingly limited range. Feet and legs are encumbrances which *prevent* your getting about except very slowly and over a narrow field. But, once set free from that clumsy tool of activities, the carnal body, and able to think without being obliged to filter all thoughts through that very imperfect thinking-machine of cellular grey matter, a being might revel gloriously in a perfectly splendid life compared with which the life we lead here is only a comatose semi-consciousness.

But what sort of a life shall it be? There is certainly an attractiveness about the still holiness of eternal adoration, intense though inactive, the rapt state in which the entranced soul lives only "to gaze and gaze on Thee." It may be only my carnal personality that makes me think, however, that there is something a little morbid in this lure —it seems to savour too much of the suppression of the individual. Well, individuality and personality *may* be low things and undesirable, as some schools teach; yet on the other hand the Christian Religion undeniably holds up Personality infinitely developed as the highest type of being.

On the whole, then, I prefer to think of my hereafter as a gloriously splendid existence, where all that is highest and best in us shall have full play, and human powers be developed and added to almost infinitely. Above all, there shall be the ever-present consciousness of *life* at its full; for

the greatest blessing of life is life itself. That tremendous exhilaration which comes, for example, to a troop of boys bathing in a sunlit river of an April morning, to a man and a maid when love first sweeps them far, far above the world—the ineffable exultation in just simply *being* which comes at such times; what must that be, when magnified to an unimaginable degree, and what limit can be set to the activities which such a life may throw off from itself as unconscious by-products, efforts as glorious, yet as unpremeditated, as the skylark's song?

The Splendid Life; this phrase is sufficient to outline my theory of the hereafter—a theory which is undoubtedly vague, but I find it satisfying; and I try to teach it as far as I can, in the hope that the bereaved may cease to mourn, and those who live in fear of death may readjust their ideas to comprehend an enviable existence whose entrance is barred to poor mortality before the appointed time.

Only one text possible, of course: "I am come that they might have life, and *that they might have it more abundantly.*"

I must be prepared for a part of my congregation giving a disapproving wag of the head. Inside, they are saying: "Too lax! Too lenient! What about the damned?"

Those damned are a great trouble to me! Is it possible, I wonder, that the biggest error may be not on the side of over-leniency? That Farrar, with his Eternal Hope, may have been no further

advanced than were Galvani and Mesmer, Stephenson, Watts, and Bell, and other discoverers and pioneers ?

This I have noticed, that the nobler a man is, so much higher is the estimate he places on men who appear base men to lesser minds. So perhaps God's estimate of the vilest may be an immeasurably high one, after all.

Such a hypothesis does not altogether lack its support from the analogy of purely mundane methods of correction. Take a child with vicious habits—you are wrong and foolish if you lock him up in a dark room and beat him. That would only make him worse, and your object is to make him better ; so you entice him into the sunlight and fresh air, give him plenty of healthy exercise and clean cold water and good food—and you have him shouting with happiness—(same thing as goodness, really)—before you know where you are ! —*Our Heavenly Father !*

But how am I to put all these things into a sermon ?

And it is a lucky thing for me that burning at the stake is no longer the vogue !

XXIV. Easter

O'ER all the land now falls a silent rain
This sad, sad Eastertide,
Tears for the brave who shall not see again
The homes for which they died;
And even this poor boon is sought in vain,
A grave to deck with flow'rs and weep beside.

Ah, God! The promise of life was bright, so bright,
High were the hopes that shone!
Sudden the fall of dark unending night,
Promise and hope both gone!
And the long years are emptied of delight
For those who fain would die but must live on.

O Happy Warriors—who, like corns of wheat
That fall into the ground
Only to live again, now at the feet
Of Christ true life have found—
Is not your triumph rendered incomplete
While those you love in sorrow's chains are bound?

For you the day has dawned: you understand
All that was dark before;
You see that everything was wisely planned
Where you had doubts of yore;
And with your knowledge now goes hand in hand
The joy of victory gained for evermore.

What rapture must be yours, ye happy brave,
This glad, glad Eastertide,
Your first with Him Who, rising from the grave,
Tells us you have not died
But live! Ah, now, this better boon we crave,
Dry Thou our tears, O Christ, Who theirs hast dried!

XXV. Sea Dogs

ALTOGETHER there have been three of them, or, to be more precise, two and a pup, who have done their bit in the war by giving us their cheerful company in this ship. Though very different in character, they have been all alike in this, that they were always ready to take part in any fun that was going on; and we owe them much good entertainment at those frequent times when the limitations of human intercourse became appallingly insistent and only the intelligence of a dog could devise means for tinging life with a little brightness.

The first one to be entered in our ship's books was Chug, a wire-haired terrier of a truly gentlemanly disposition and engaging habits. He had a black diamond-shaped patch over his left eye that was really rather fascinating. The naval habit of indulging in peaceful slumber when there is nothing else doing he had acquired to a remarkable degree of completeness, and generally spent the whole of the forenoon in a corner of one of the settees where he liked to lie stretched out at full length, usually on his back, with his head lolling

over the edge towards the deck. From this position there were few things that could rouse him; one might grasp him by a hind leg—and frequently did so—and drag him to the other end of the settee, spinning him round two or three times during the proceeding, but Chug might have been a dead dog for all the notice he took of it. One thing alone succeeded in bringing him to life on these occasions; I regret to say that Chug was exceedingly gun-shy; and if even the mildest form of "piff" reached his ears he was up and away in an instant, streaking down to his master's cabin, or crawling beneath the settee, from whence he would emerge when all was over, limp and bedraggled.

But he had a distinction which I imagine very few dogs can boast: he invented an entirely new game, all by himself. It was called the Match Game. Two players were required, of whom one was Chug and the other anybody he could inveigle into taking part. The game began by Chug nosing around the deck till he found a match-stick, which he would pick up with his lips and deposit gently on your knee as you sat reading a book. Next, he would sit up and look plaintively at you with his head just a little on one side—and you know how pleading and persuasive a dog can be when he does that! The dog knows it too, of course, and plays it for all it is worth, occasionally resting his chin, oh! so gently, upon your knee if the glance alone fails.

Your part now, having reached the point when

you could not resist any longer—and Chug would wait for this for a quarter of an hour if need be, knowing it was bound to come—was to flick the match-stick with your forefinger as far as possible; upon which the principal performer would leap in chase of it utterly regardless whether his course led across the faces or the stomachs of his two-legged messmates, delight suddenly bursting from him as though he were a high explosive shell filled with sheer happiness which lay quiescent till touched off by the flicking of the match.

On a good day this game might be kept up for a solid hour; the first player to tire of it was never Chug. It is said that when he went on leave to London Town and visited the Goat he created quite a sensation by his skill at the match game. Chug bit an officer once. But he didn't mean to! It was like this: Chug was having a most awfully exciting time, playing with lots of fellows all together. Then, for some reason, it occurred to the officer in question to drop down on his hands and knees and pretend to be a dog too. Chug really thought he was one, for the moment; and, naturally, bit him in the face. Anybody would have done the same, in such circumstances; I know *I* should have! But you should have seen how frightfully apologetic Chug was the instant he found out his mistake! As I told you, Chug was a gentleman.

Was, alas! His master was appointed from us to a destroyer, and of course Chug went with him. And out on the broad Atlantic—remember, a poor

little dog cannot hang on to a stanchion—a wave leapt on board, and swept the deck. It was a real sea-dog's end, Chug; but we all of us grieved when we heard what had happened to you!

Next came Robert the bulldog. He had, besides this, an official name bearing an honoured place in the pedigree-book, but to us he was always Robert. *His* particular form of amusement was scrapping; and when some fifty-odd pounds of bulldog go for you, propelled by muscles like steel springs, it is as well to be very wide awake indeed! But the play was always good-natured.

Robert suffering from distemper was a lamentable and pathetic sight! Big baby, he *did* so like sympathy and petting! I am not quite sure that he didn't keep it up some days after he was really well again, just to prolong the agreeable attentions universally paid to the sick!

Our only sea-dog now is a wee black pup belonging to the painter. It is a mere ball of fat and fur, and it is funny to see him running along the deck towards his master in a sidling lollop and tripping over himself occasionally, his heart being stronger than his legs. There is decidedly a touch of collie about him. But when I questioned the painter as to what he thought the pup would turn out to be, he could only say, "I don't rightly know, sir; just a dog, I fancy!"

I am delighted to be able to add that this note of mine referring to Chug elicited the following letter a couple of weeks later. I feel sure that

there are others besides myself who will be glad to learn that Chug still lives:

To the Editor of the "Saturday Westminster."

DEAR SIR,—It was with pain and surprise that I read of my decease in your issue of September 8th.

I shall be very grateful for a little of your space to be able to inform my large circle of friends that I am still in the Land, or rather the "Fleet," of the Living.

My obituary notice was inserted, in all kindness, by one of my friends, "A Grand Fleet Chaplain," and I should like to explain how the mistake occurred.

Report had it that a dog had been lost from my ship, and naturally everyone jumped to the conclusion that it was me. But it was poor Sinbad who lost the number of his mess. Sinbad belonged to the "Chief," and was a nice well-bred youngster, but such a puppy. He had just put in a request to be rated O.S., and—well! although I say it as shouldn't—with my teaching he would have turned into a well-behaved and sporting dog. But, alas! he was never destined to reach Dog's estate.

It happened thus: We were somewhere in the Atlantic, and for a wonder it was very nice smooth weather, with just the suspicion of a swell running. Master and the Chief were yarning by the ward-room hatch, and I was trying a few flicks at the match game with the Snottie, to keep my hand in. Sinbad was looking about for something to

destroy. Presently the Chief called Sinbad, but he was nowhere to be seen. We searched the ship from stem to stern, and from truck to keelson, but not a sign did we find of poor little Sinbad. I sat for a long time thinking the matter over, and came to the conclusion that he had been trying to walk outside the guard rails round the quarter-deck—a dangerous practice which I had constantly warned him against, but puppies will be puppies—and had slipped over the side unseen.

Poor Sinbad! We were all very sorry to lose him. It took me a long time to realise that he had really gone, and for weeks afterwards I used unconsciously to look for his plate at dinner, expecting to see him come bounding along to share it with me. Ah, me! it is with sad thoughts I daily eat my solitary meal.

They say that the souls of departed sailormen take the form of seagulls. I believe this, so am constantly on the look-out, and feel sure that I shall see Sinbad one of these days.

Hoping that my friends will see this letter and learn that I am still going strong, and prepared to take them on to the last match, I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

CHUG.

H.M.S. *Narwhal.*

XXVI. Names

A DEVOUT old lady once told me that there was scarcely any part of the Bible she enjoyed reading more than the lists of names such as occur in the genealogies and catalogues of families; as, for instance, that very fascinating enumeration, given in the tenth chapter of Nehemiah, of those that signed the covenant: Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zatthu, Bani, Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, Ater, Hizkijah, Azzur, Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai, Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir—there are a lot more of them really, but these are sufficient to illustrate the point. Are they not, indeed, attractive, even irresistible? I feel that I should so much like to have enjoyed the acquaintance of Bani and Bunni; and there is a ring about the sound of Hariph and Magpiash which is sadly lacking in our modern cognomens.

Undoubtedly, names possess a great fascination, especially place-names. I am not the only one of us who has felt this; our Major of Marines told me the other day that when he retires he is determined to settle down in Budleigh Salterton—not that he

knows anything about the place or has even seen it; but, as he truly remarks, it must be a constant delight to live in a locality blessed with such a name.

But what of the endless array of place-names brought to light by the events of the past three years? Against all the horrors and evils of the war there are certainly some few blessings to be set in counterbalance, and amongst these latter we may well assign a little niche to the rediscovery of so many delightful names once buried deep in gazetteers and atlases, but now brought to the surface by the sword or by the sharp keels of ships.

Those which have been churned up from the ocean naturally appeal to me most. There are a fine lot of them for you to roll your tongue round. To take a couple for a start, what do you think of the Butt of Lewis and Swarbacks Minn? One beauty about this sample pair is that you cannot tell (unless you happen to know) just what they are; whether towns, or islands, straits, or lakes, or isthmuses. But you feel that you do not want to know; the names, simply as names, are sufficiently convincing, and there is a fine old piratical flavour about them too. The Butt of Lewis (you must pronounce it Looz) at once calls up the idea of an old North Sea rover's hogshead of red wine, with all his jolly companions sitting around it, carousing in the glimmer of the Northern Lights; whilst, as for Swarbacks Minn, I cannot help thinking, Devonshire man as I am, that it must be even jollier to live there than at Budleigh Salterton.

You will probably have heard by this time of the existence of a place called Scapa Flow, and perhaps even of Busta Voe, Muckle Flugga, Fair Island, and Sumburgh Head. There is a beautiful ring of romance in the very sound of all those names, is there not ?

But—well, we have in this ship a certain man whose letters frequently come before me for censoring; he invariably includes in them the message " Love to Dashey and Millow." Did you ever hear of more ravishing names for little children? The very first time I met the written names I was so fascinated by them that I formed a mental picture of their small owners. Dashey, of course, is a wild little thing, half-elf, half-mystic, her eyes filled sometimes with fire and always with wonderment—rarely with tears; her dark hair springs with a boyish " cow's-lick " from her high forehead, and a nervous brown hand often brushes it back with a quick movement of impatience, for it has a habit of getting in her eyes when she runs or stoops—and Dashey is always on the move.

Millow, on the other hand, is more often still. She is fairer and her eyes are grey; and when she slowly raises those grey eyes to yours and you look down into them you feel a sudden unexplained heart-break, and have it on your lips to say, " Child, child, what thoughts are those you are thinking ? "

So vivid were these dream-pictures of Dashey and Millow that when a fitting opportunity offered itself I questioned the writer of the letters about his little friends.

Then the romance went out suddenly; they were sisters-in-law of his, well in their thirties!

I have not told this moving story without purpose; my object is to point out that the places mentioned above, although there may be a full flavour of romance in their names, are not nearly so entrancing when you get to know them!

A similar hollowness lies behind the high-sounding names of Inchkeith, Carnoustie, Dysart, and a good many others I might name; but in future, if I want to tickle my ears with pleasant sounds, I shall forsake all place-names and stick to Bani and Bunni; there is no chance of my making personal acquaintance with them, so I shall not run the risk of disappointment.

XXVII. Jetsam

TREASURES or trifles cast up by the sea after many days; floating unclaimed till the tide or a chance wind drifts them ashore, then seized upon to be kept or shared by the finder, according to his pleasure.

Such a description may be aptly applied to the jetsam of two stories which have been hidden in the dark, unfathomed caves of ocean since the battle of Jutland; whether they come under the heading of trifles or of treasures must be left to the decision of others, but I can at least vouch for their genuineness; they are not like the "Slightly damaged goods saved from the wreck of the s.s. Something-or-other" of the drapers' sale catalogues, goods which you know have probably been sculling around in store-rooms for ever so long and handled by all sorts of people; but are the Real Thing.

The first story comes from one of our battle-cruisers, a ship which was in the thick of the action and was well hammered by the enemy. Many poor fellows lost the number of their mess, and many more were sadly wounded. Amongst these

latter was a sailor whose leg was so much shattered and lacerated by a splinter of shell that there was nothing else to do but amputate it above the knee. The poor wounded man was practically unconscious from loss of blood, so the surgeons were not able to tell him of their intentions before operating. Some hours later he recovered consciousness, and found himself comfortably tucked up, with the stump dressed and bandaged. When he learnt what had happened, he broke into an agonised cry. No, not for the crippling he had undergone; his cry was, "Where's my leg? For 'Evin's sake, find my leg, somebody! *It's got all my money in the stocking!*"

The hottest moment of the action forms the time of the second story. A ship of ours had been hit, somewhere near the ward-room, so far as could be judged; but those who were at the guns could not tell the extent of the damage, as they had quite sufficient to occupy them. At one gun stood an officer with his gun's crew, busily pumping shell into the enemy with all the speed he could, and thinking of nothing else but the fall of shot; his binoculars were kept fast fixed to his eyes, and his sight directed only upon the ship at which he was firing. Consequently he did not see a man come running up to him, and only turned at the excited message shouted into his ear—"It's all right, sir, it's all right!"

"What d'ye mean, 'it's all right'?" he replied, without diverting his gaze.

"It's all right, sir, I've just been to 'ave a look at it!"

"*What's* all right, you silly idiot ?"

"Why, the new billiard table as you orf'cers got for the ward-room last week ; I've just bin along there to 'ave a look—'arf the wardroom's in splinters, but the billiard table isn't even touched !"

It is a fact, so used were we to sweeping the North Sea in battle array on the look-out for a fight, that many people did not know that "the real thing" was happening until they actually heard the first sound of the guns. This indeed was the experience of a certain gunnery lieutenant who by virtue of his office was in a position to see more and know more than most people. But the suddenness of the affair cannot be better illustrated than by the attitude of our Decoding Officer. This individual had been having a somewhat strenuous time with his work just previously, and had hoped for a quiet spell while on this particular stunt. So, naturally, his first remark when the signals began pouring in on the morning of Jutland, was—"I'm bothered if they haven't started *another* of those confounded *Wireless Exercises !*"

XXVIII. Boats

SHIPS' boats are of various types and sizes, ranging from the little sixteen-foot skiff which can be pulled by one man to the great launch which, at a pinch, can hold a hundred men. I confess to a great fondness for all of them, both because they form such a strong link with the Navy of olden days, and also because in these times, when the greatest forces are put in motion by pressing a button or turning a switch, there is a certain glory attaching to anything that can only be worked by the power of the strong arm or by the elemental aid of the winds of heaven; for all our boats are constructed for sailing, as well as for pulling. We have steamboats, too, it is true, and wonderful little craft they are in their way, but there is not quite the same glamour about them as there is about those which call for the glorious effort of strong muscles or for the nice judgment of hand and eye displayed skilfully in a stiff sailing breeze.

Seamanship nowadays is rapidly becoming a thing of the past, and our ships are manned by a race of clerks and mechanics, but boatwork is the

one thing that keeps alive the old qualities that marked the fine seamen of the past; also, there is no endurance like that which is demanded from the men toiling at the oars in a long pull against a head sea, and no discipline comparable to that which must be maintained by a sailing boat's crew, when orders must be carried out instantly and the lives of all may depend upon implicit obedience.

In most pictures of old sea-battles there is a boat being pulled through the water in the thickest of the fight; this is not altogether an effort of the artist's imagination, put in to give variety to the sea-scape: it represents the manner in which important orders were once conveyed by the admiral to another vessel of his fleet when signalling was executed only by flags and in a very rudimentary fashion. In these days wireless telegraphy does all that is necessary, and boats are not required for this particular purpose. Another frequent use of boats in the old sea-wars was for cutting-out expeditions, or for storming a coastal position where the waters were shallow; as a rule, the seamen pulled the boat with their cutlasses handy beside them, and marines with their muskets were massed in the stern-sheets, as also may be observed in old engravings. Marryat's stories are full of such expeditions, very daringly planned and hazardous in the performance, but frequently, though not by any means always, very successful. And it is very interesting to note that this present war has seen a notable revival of such methods

and enterprises in the attack by whalers upon Dar-es-Salaam. Whalers are naval boats pointed at both ends and ordinarily pulled by five oars—very manageable boats either under oars or sail, and able to hold from twenty-five to thirty men in a smooth sea.

Certain of the ancient boats have been discarded, or else their names changed; the "long-boat," which figures so prominently in many a stirring sea-yarn, is no longer with us; nor is the "cock-boat," though its name survives in the cock-swain or coxswain. But the cutter, which is a very old type, still survives, and is surely an instance of the survival of the fittest; for never was there a boat devised equal for beauty, for reliability, for all good sea-quality, to a naval cutter. The launch may be twice her size, and the pinnace nearly as much, but the cutter will dance merrily along through seas in which neither pinnace nor launch could live half an hour, and be quite dry inboard withal. And as for beauty, watch a cutter with her twin white sails speeding through the waves with the wind on her quarter—no finer picture can be seen on all the wide seas.

The cutter is for work, but the galley's a lady, and the gig's a lady, too. Galley and gig have but little difference between them, save that the former is slightly the bigger boat and is the Admiral's own private bark, while the gig performs the same function for the Captain. Gig and galley are things of beauty, with lovely, fine lines. Their sides are resplendent with enamel, and their

plentiful brasswork shines like gold. The rowers' thwarts have little mats of blue edged with white; their yoke-lines are made of cords cunningly plaited and finished off with a Turk's head; the brass tiller-head is wrought into the pattern of twining snakes or else of Admiralty anchors; and the men who form the crews of these boats are greater aristocrats than any to be found in the Peerage. Only in a regatta are these boats brought down to the level of their more plebeian sisters, and then they are treated unceremoniously enough but with scrupulous care. At such times, with all the other boats in the ship, they are lowered on deck, and stripped of every fitting that might add unnecessarily to their weight, till they look the mere gutted carcases of boats; drained and dried, for the same reason, and their glory of paint scraped smooth to make them glide the better through the water; and the racing crew, if given a free hand, would plane them down to so thin a skin that they would never be fit for Admiral or Captain again!

XXIX. Eyes and No-Eyes

THIS is a world of such upside-downs that one of our most familiar expressions is that we do not know whether we are on our head or our heels; further, the process of turning things upside-down occurs so rapidly and so frequently, like the gyrations of a toy tumbling clown, that we are sometimes quite at a loss to settle whether the natural position is really that of head uppermost or heels. Little English children picture the little Australians as hanging head-downwards in the air; but it is very disconcerting to find that the little Australian children hold exactly the same ideas about the English. Paradox is admittedly and intentionally a startling mode of expression, but when it approximates to a universal fashion the speech or essay that contains no paradox becomes itself paradoxical. All wonders cease to be wonderful as soon as they become common; if you were to see a newspaper paragraph headed "Legless Man Wins Hundred Yards Race" your mental comment would be that such a number of similar things happen that it was only to be expected. "Deceased was well known as a strong

swimmer " has grown to be so familiar in accounts of bathing accidents that you would be far more surprised at hearing that the deceased was unable to swim a stroke.

So, by such processes, things ordinary, normal, and natural become the wonderful things, while the supernatural, unexpected, and inexplicable things become those which are naturally looked for.

Every invention that comes to light is commonly greeted with the cry of " How very simple and obvious ! How is it that no one ever thought of this before ? " And the successful, simple, obvious inventions are just as invariably preceded by the wiseacres' objection, " Impossible and absurd ! It can never be made to work ! "

You might well think it wonderful that anyone should oppose something proved afterwards to be patently excellent, but you are so accustomed to seeing this happen that you grow to look for it as the right and proper state of affairs ; you have so often been up-ended and placed head-downwards that to stand on your heels would by this time feel quite strange. Supposing you were told that wireless telegraphy was in common use with the ancient Egyptians, you wouldn't turn a mental hair ; if you were told that the war was going to cost us a hundred millions a day you would, by this time, say no more than : " Dear me, quite a large sum ! "

Yet this ought not to be. To my mind it seems that this habit of regarding the abnormal as the

normal state of things has taken deep root among us, and that it is a very bad habit.

A bad habit, because it entirely destroys all sense of proportion and perspective in our views; it tends to make us belittle great achievements, and to be content with stupid ignorance.

There used to be a book called "Eyes and No-Eyes," very popular a generation or so ago. It described how one child found his walks dull and monotonous, while another, who had been trained to recognise beauty and the wonders of Nature, found the same walks teeming with interest.

But we have grown to acquiesce in the mental standpoint of young "No-Eyes," to find excuses for him, and to regard him almost as the normal type of humanity.

What we need to be reminded of is that the wonderful really is wonderful, and that to oppose the obvious is really crassly stupid and wrong.

These reflections are the outcome of a conversation with one of our engineer-officers, at a time when we were watching the other ships from our quarter-deck, the ponderous battleships with all their marvellous potential speed.

He recalled to my mind the fact that when it was first suggested to build ships of iron people scoffed loudly at the idea; iron, they said, would naturally sink in water!

Yet those scoffers must have seen iron floating scores and scores of times; an old crock thrown away and floating in a pond, saucepans floating in the tub they were being cleansed in, and so forth.

I was able to cap his statement with another of which he had not before heard, namely, that the Board of Admiralty rejected as too fanciful for practical men the idea of propelling men-of-war by steam power, when this invention was first brought to their notice. Steam, they said, *might* be useful, up to a certain point; perhaps steam-tugs might be employed, to tow the battleships into action; but anything further than this was just a crazy notion!

Is it not marvellous that they should have been able to escape seeing that the same power which could drive a little vessel might conceivably be employed to drive a big one; and that the advantages of steam over sails were well nigh incalculable?

Yet in both cases they missed the obvious; they had Eyes and No-Eyes.

But we now stand more guilty, if we reconcile ourselves to such ignorance, accepting it, since "Things like that, you know, must be." Critics of Christianity frequently object that none of Christ's teachings were original; doctrines precisely similar to His had been taught long before His day, over and over again. Quite so; but iron had also floated long before people discovered that ships could be made out of it, and steam had driven vessels long before the Admiralty found out that men-of-war could be propelled by this method. To put these old doctrines convincingly, so that they should touch the heart, that was what Christ discovered; and ours is the fault if we fail to see how wonderful this discovery was.

If you think it out, it has very ill effects—this refusal to recognise the wonderfulness of wonderful things. Christ Himself had no more constant complaint than that against the great class of people who, " Having eyes, see not "—that is, the " Eyes and No-Eyes " people.

XXX. School

BOYS in the naval training establishments, both on shore and afloat, get a very good education of an elementary sort, and promptly forget it all the moment they turn their backs upon those excellent institutions—as is the way of a good many other boys besides those of the Navy.

So when they come to sea, one of the first things to be impressed on them is that they must not think they have "finished" their education; and an all-embracing routine provides that they shall proceed with the advancement of learning until they reach the age of eighteen, whether they like it or not.

We have not, of course, the advantages that they have in the Army, with their large schoolrooms and trained teachers. Our schoolroom is usually one of the flats, or a casemate, and our schoolmasters are volunteers from the lower deck, most frequently a sergeant-major or a writer. An hour or so every day is about the share of each boy, and even this small amount is often rendered impossible by the "exigencies of the Service"—in the case of newly joined boys not seldom also

by sea-sickness! So their studies are conducted under a good many difficulties! Our own schoolroom, for example, is in the office-flat, which is also the steering-engine flat; there is a continuous groan and rattle of machinery, and a constant going and coming of visitors to the Fount of Knowledge—which is, of course, the official domain of the Accountant Staff.

Amongst all this you may watch two long rows of boys seated on forms and bending over a narrow table, crouching round-shouldered or leaning half-sideways on one elbow, all in attitudes that would strike horror into any hygienophile of the up-to-date educationist world! But, fortunately, these same boys spend the best part of their lives in the finest physical exercises that have ever been invented—namely, the ordinary everyday work of a sailor—and so an hour's relaxing will not hurt them very much.

Most of them are in the throes of "money-sums," and the knitting of brows and agonised thrusting of tongues into cheeks show how fierce is the mental struggle entailed. Others have got as far as fractions, or even have adventured into that mysterious region of "decimals" which to more backward travellers seems the distant land of the awful unknown. But the painstaking acting schoolmaster wanders from one boy to another, giving a helping hand to such as are labouring heavily, and ever opening up new fields of discovery.

There are even boys who are on terms of famili-

arity with algebra and trigonometry, logarithms, and mechanics; but these are the Olympians of the "Advanced Class," conducted by myself and the Naval Instructor: *non cuivis attingit*—there are very few who attain to this height.

We tackle other subjects besides mathematics, you must understand. It is only a very few years ago that there used to be demanded from every ship an official "return" of the number of men unable to read and write; and although school-work has advanced so much that this is no longer considered necessary to call for, yet there still remain certain difficulties connected with these two members of the three R's which require to be coped with incessantly. Geography, too, and history, especially that of the Empire and the Navy, have part of our attention.

It is a striking testimony to the efficiency of the Navy, and I hope an indication of our general temperament as a nation, that school-work on board ship has been carried on far more assiduously since the start of the war than ever it was before. It would be excusable, even natural, to jump at the conclusion that all such studies would be dropped in these strenuous days, that every minute would be devoted to the immediate purpose of preparing for the ever present chance of battle. The opposite of this is the case; and the reason is, partly, that the Navy is kept always in such a state of readiness and efficiency that it would not dream of allowing a thing like a war to disturb it from its calm routine; and partly that

a wise forethought shows how necessary it is to prepare now the men and the officers for the Navy that shall be in being when this present magnificent fleet shall be relegated to the scrap-heap.

We do "Composition" in our school. Simple subjects, connected with things which the boys know well, are set for their essays. The average sailor has plenty of ideas, but finds great difficulty in expressing them; so a certain amount of practice in the earlier stage of his career may be of considerable help to him later on.

Quite a large number of our "subjects" circle around the absorbing topic of Leave. "How to spend an enjoyable leave when you have not much money" was one of my setting, given with the idea that it might provide some useful hints for the future. The resulting essays brought forth some quite sensible remarks about bicycle rides, country walks, and other simple pleasures; but the impression conveyed generally was that Leave under such circumstances was likely to prove "a bit sad"!

An essay on "Christmas" was depressing, to say the least of it! The outstanding feature of all the entries was the stress laid upon the splendid amount of food to be enjoyed at that season; though one boy did say that "people go to church in the morning"; the only theologian amongst them all stated that Christmas was the anniversary of our Lord's Resurrection. But he really knew better, of course; and, after all, they were healthy,

hungry boys—not cloistered students of divinity! Since the above was written, fully qualified Schoolmasters have been added to the complement of all large ships, and the benefits of this innovation are already very evident.

XXXI. "*P.Z.*"

AT the moment of writing this, we are in the throes of a P.Z., in the North Sea.

That is sufficiently vague, I hope, with regard to the locality; and as for the date, it will be many weeks before this can appear in print, so in this respect also I am not giving much away.

For the same reason of cautiousness I shall refrain from giving any accurate and detailed account of a P.Z., which of course would be of untold value to the enemy. There is, besides, another reason why I purposely abstain from such a description—and that is, because I could not do it if I tried, owing to my profound and entire ignorance of such a highly technical subject.

I deal only in generalities, and in my own little naval Curiosity Shop collect merely such trifles as take my fancy, without pretending to possess any skilled knowledge about them, hoping only that the articles please also those who deal with me.

But what is a P.Z. ?

I put this same question to a watch-keeper, in the very early days of my naval career. He glared

at me with a bitter and melancholy glare, and replied briefly :

"Hell's delight!"

However, this did not help me very much, so I turned to the Fleet Engineer—(they were not called Engineer Commanders in those days), and put the same question to him.

He said : "What is a P.Z.? Why, a quick method of getting rid of several hundred tons of good coal!"

This also left me just as much in the dark. A facetious Cornishman next volunteered the information that the letters stood for Penzance ; which I knew was quite true, having seen them on the brown mainsails of Cornish trawlers in Mounts Bay ; but the remark was made in such an evident spirit of raillery that I searched around for a fitting retort, and could think of nothing better to say than that the letters also stood for Poor Zany ; but this was such a weak effort at repartee, and Zany is such an unconvincing word after all, that I left it unsaid, and the honours remained with him.

And it was not until my desire for knowledge had led me into further researches that I found out at last a P.Z. is what corresponds at sea to a sham fight ashore.

There is no mystery attached to the two letters ; they do not "stand for" anything at all, but are simply taken from a signal book where similar groups of letters in many permutations and combinations indicate a vast number of naval orders

and phrases in a short and convenient form. We are, as I said, in the midst of a P.Z. now. An impressionist picture of our fleet at the present moment would paint a wide stretch of grey tumbling waters, over which a countless number of ships of all sizes and classes are tearing at high speed in every possible direction and apparently quite aimlessly. I say a "countless" number, because if you were to stand on deck and look around to try and count them you would find they are like the stars on a summer night, which appear to grow in number the longer you gaze at them. Look steadily at the horizon until your eyes ache with looking, and you will see another large squadron you had overlooked at the first count; they are only just visible, dimly merging into the hazy tones of sea and sky, and, as you watch them, they disappear again.

Nothing more definite than this breaks the horizon. There is no land in sight anywhere. This, by the way, is what the Germans describe as "the British fleet hiding securely in its well-defended harbours"; and a certain section of our own public seems more than half inclined to believe them; which, of course, is just what the Germans want. But in a sense, after all, they are correct. The seas themselves are Britain's harbours, well defended by her steel walls now as by her wooden walls of old; and in these wide harbours we certainly have done a very fair share of "lurking" since the war began; and although we should be delighted to extend the hospitality of our "hiding-

places" to the enemy, we have had them all to ourselves save on extremely rare occasions.

The rapid and complicated movements of the ships dashing so wildly about on all sides are, of course, meaningless only to the uninstructed. They remind one of nothing so much as those curious water-beetles which can be seen on a stagnant pond on any summer's day, gyrating over the surface as though skating on ice, and continually passing and repassing one another, circling rapidly over the water in apparent confusion though they never collide nor get in each other's way.

In reality, the bewildering movements of the ships are as full of purpose and as scientifically co-ordinated as the figures of that dance beloved of all bluejackets and known to them as the Dee Awlberts—that is, the D'Alberts.

One portion of the fleet represents the enemy, and we—the other portion—represent ourselves; and we experiment with the other fellows in various ways, much in the same manner as a professor of jiu-jitsu might practice his old tricks or learn new ones on the vile body of his apprentice.

Sometimes it happens that the apprentice succeeds in throwing the professor—and then we metaphorically scratch our heads and wonder what we did wrong, or whether some other dodge might be more effectual. A P.Z. in the old days was a much more alarming affair than it is now, because it was so rare an occurrence, at least on the grand scale. On some stations it was just an annual

treat, like a Sunday-school picnic—which it much resembled indeed in many respects, notably the light-hearted tendency of many of the party to run away and lose themselves.

I remember, for example, a P.Z. in the Mediterranean, a dozen years ago, when the Atlantic Fleet came up " the Straits " to play with us. We met them somewhere off Lagos, and the two fleets at once proceeded to play " Here We Come Gathering Nuts in May "—a P.Z. is really very much like that game !

But unfortunately—well, have you ever seen the game in question as sometimes played at the Sunday-school treats referred to above, where the children forget the rules in their happy carelessness and get all mixed up ? We were just like that ; and we finished up the battle with all the ships of both fleets booming along at full speed on parallel courses, inextricably confused, friend and foe side by side, steaming hell-for-leather in a mad race for a non-existent goal ! How we all escaped ramming each other is more than I can say ; but the situation was well summed up by our Rear Admiral—(he is an Admiral of the Fleet now, and doubtless remembers the incident)—who signalled to his nearest opponent—*Is this the battle of Armageddon* ?

On another and more recent occasion an amusing contretemps occurred with curious results. It really happened during manœuvres, but these are nothing more than a glorified P.Z. The fleets were carefully placed in their prearranged dispositions with a definite object, namely to prove that the

set scheme of the enemy force could be successfully counterchecked in several different ways.

But unhappily for the plan the Admiral commanding the "enemy" force was a man of ideas as well as of action; and no sooner had the order been given to begin hostilities than he at once sailed from his base and mopped up his opponents piecemeal, thereby disproving all the accepted theories and bringing the manœuvres to a sudden close before they were properly started. It was just as though the Dragon had swallowed St. George at the first onset and consequently spoiled the whole of a combat that promised to be most interesting and instructive!

A P.Z. nowadays is a very serious and strenuous affair, entailing as much preparation as one of those trench raids which figure so unimportantly in the communiqués but mean so much previous working up in reality. And after the schemes have been carefully worked out on paper by the various admirals' staffs there is a great deal more preparatory work while actually at sea before the opposing fleets meet for their sham battle. Everyone on board has a share in it. I have even a small one myself. But naturally it is the admirals and captains who find the most excitement in such exercises—which are rather like living chess, where you can't exactly say you are not taking part in the game so long as you are dressed up to represent a White Knight or a Black Bishop, but the people who get the most fun out of it are those who move the pieces about the board.

Perhaps the Gunnery Lieutenants also manage to suck a little excitement out of the proceedings; for they are a separate class of human beings, who can always succeed in raising a thrill provided they are allowed to waggle their guns about and point them at the horizon or another ship or the moon or —well, anything. Then they will come down to the wardroom and sit up half the night talking about straddles and ladders and spotting and plotting, only switching off occasionally to turn the current of high-voltage anathemas on to the officer of K turret, or the T.S., or the voice-pipe numbers—unhappy criminals who bow their heads meekly before the storm of wrath but survive it somehow and never seem a penny the worse for it.

But to the Hoi Polloi, there is no denying the fact, a P.Z. is rather a boring affair. The Navigator doesn't like it, because it keeps him on the bridge for several hours without any extra pay, which of course is a crying shame; watchkeepers do not like it either, but then they are never happy unless they have a moan about something, so perhaps it works indirectly to give them pleasure. Nobody, in brief, is altogether sorry when it is all over. This is the sort of thing you hear in the wardroom:

"Well, is the battle over?"

"Yes, thank goodness. And if it had been a pukka show we should all be at the bottom of the sea by this time!"

"Why? What went wrong?"

"What went wrong? Did anything go right?

Well, well, there won't be another one till next time, that's one blessing!"

I fancy that a similar conversation may sometimes be heard in Army messes. The pitiful incompetence of all officers senior to yourself in affairs of strategy is, of course, proverbial. Strangely enough, the opinions expressed do not preclude a very deep admiration for the officers concerned, nor do they in any way imply that the show has really been a failure; they are not intended to, but merely represent that tired feeling which supervenes on affairs which have been—to put it mildly—slightly lacking in personal interest.

Yet P.Z.'s are the thing, after all. Not the real thing, but next door to it, and indispensable to a Fighting Navy. The Battle of Waterloo was won anywhere but on the playing fields of Eton; it was won on a hundred drill-grounds and at innumerable deadly dull parades; and the final battle for Sea Power, if ever it is fought, will be won not so much through the sports which help to keep the Navy fit and happy, but by countless P.Z. exercises in which admirals and captains have practised their hands at the great game.

XXXII. Seaplanes

FOR myself, I must confess that I can never look at one of these machines in mid-air without entering thoroughly into the feelings of the gentleman who when visiting the Zoo and seeing a rhinoceros for the first time in his life remarked "Ridic'lous! There ain't no such animal!" Similarly, I have not yet quite succeeded in believing that seaplanes and aeroplanes really *do* fly; I suppose our grandfathers had much the same sort of lingering doubts as to the reality of the steam-driven locomotives which they saw rushing along the countryside. It takes a child to have perfect faith in these new-fangled contraptions; a child sees nothing strange in such things, since he knows them no later than he knows trees and horses and other familiar objects.

One ought to be able to found upon this a general theory to the effect that it is very hard to take up a new faith when once the age of childhood is passed. And to a certain extent this is so: the honest plain answer to the question often propounded by young curates as a subject for their Lenten Lectures—*Why am I a Churchman?*—

is, of course, Because my father was before me; but, on the other hand, seeing that many people can adopt a new creed with as much apparent ease as a distillery changing into a munition factory, perhaps I had better drop the theory and get back to my seaplanes.

I saw one of them, the other day, flying over the fleet. He was chucking stunts. The seemingly loose construction of this pair of sentences is, if you please, intended to mark how completely the man becomes identified with the machine; if a horse and his rider are one, much more so are an aviator and his plane. So I repeat that he was chucking stunts. And he was chucking them at a very great and dizzy height.

Moralists have frequently had occasion to point out that Poet Tennyson made a very bad side-slip when he wrote, "We needs must love the highest when we see it"; speaking for myself, I am quite content to do all my travelling on good water and have no hankering at all for airy heights. But this fellow had; and though his immediate task was no more than to return to his seaplane carrier after a practice-flight, he must needs do this in a succession of headlong dives and breath-taking steep curves which, being decoded, meant obviously that this is a jolly old world after all, and it is a good thing to be young, and this is a topping fine morning, and we shall see the Germans off if it takes us a hundred years. All this in a few curves and dashes, but it was a far more explicit system of shorthand than ever Pitman invented. If at any

time a writer on the Dignity of Labour desires an illustration of sheer delight in work he cannot do better than impress the aviator into his service.

And I have seen the shattered remains of a seaplane lying like a dead sea-gull on the foreshore; a pathetic sight in itself, and indicative of who knows what mischance besides—a mere annoying accident, or a sudden and swift tragedy? For such quick reapings occur—have occurred; it is not only in battle against the enemy's aircraft that fatal danger lurks, but in battle against the up-rushing unexpected squall, against the numbing and blinding hail-storm and the many other demons of the middle heavens which haunt the northern mists; and the destroyer-men know what it is to streak out in the dark and quarter the choppy seas in search of a seaplane which ought to have come back but has not. They know what they may hope to find at most: a tangle of heaving wreckage, of floats and wings and stays, which they will conscientiously tow shorewards in token of their task accomplished, leaving it strewn on the beach for a casual stroller like myself to stumble upon and wonder at.

Yet this toll is not exacted in vain; it is like that "Price of Admiralty" which has been paid by seamen unnumbered and unsung in the velvet days of peace as well as in the iron times of war through all the years of the life of the Navy; and against the bitter price may be set the treasured achievement, in which the seaplanes have already begun to have their holding; who has not read of

the part played by the seaplanes in the Jutland fight? Of that, and of other well-meriting deeds beside?

It fits well with all the amazingness of this amazing war that we should take the seaplane for such a matter of course as we do; an almost untried machine at the time the war began, and even uninvented a little while before that. Yet I have observed peasants, who never in their lives have seen a railway train, continue unmoved at their drudgery without even casting an upward glance when a seaplane was thrumming away over their heads. To me it was still a phenomenon, a prodigy; to them, whose narrow horizon had never been nor ever would be broken save at the rarest intervals by strange experiences, use had already dulled its wonder. But are we not ourselves as custom-hardened, who daily hear the rustling of archangels' wings in the air above us, but will not know the time's familiar occurrences for Powers and Portents?

XXXIII. The Air Raid on Cuxhaven, Christmas Day, 1914

IN the chill of the still wintry dawn,
Mists hanging over the face of the deep,
Now without motion
Rest on the ocean
Waterplanes rocking like seagulls asleep;
There's a stir and a whirr—they are gone!
Into the skies
Quickly they rise,
Skilfully guided by piloting hand,
Eastwards they're steering.
No danger fearing,
Off to the waters of Heligoland!
Further yet ere they get to the goal,
On to take vengeance for deeds of foul shame,
Seeking a harbour—a
Stronger than Scarborough—
Ships, and not women and children, their aim!
They are at the grey rat in his hole,
Hunting the craven
Fleet at Cuxhaven,
They want an enemy who can hit back;
They fight like fair men,

These British airmen,
No peaceful village need fear their attack!
There's a crash as they dash swiftly down
Volleys of bombs on the terrified crew,
Smoke, flames, and cries,
Mingling arise,
Telling the airmen their aim has been true.
But a swarm gathers form from the town,
Zeppelins, aeroplanes, rush to the fray,
Shots now exchanging,
Dodging, outranging,
True British airmanship soon wins the day!
Making rings with their wings round the foe,
The airmen laugh all the vain efforts to scorn;
Suddenly veering,
Swift disappearing,
Westwards they trend again,
Homewards they wend again,
Back to the battleships quickly they go,
Ere yet the rising sun says, "It is morn!"

XXXIV. Food Economy

WE of the Wardroom have now for some little time been rationing ourselves on an economical scale. In order to prevent any misconceptions—who knows but that the Hun, reading the above, might jump to the gleeful conclusion that the British Navy is on starvation diet?—let me hasten to explain that the scheme was entirely voluntary on our part; there was no question of making a virtue of necessity, although at the start there was a certain danger of our making a virtue of our free-will choice, to our own undoing; for, just as the early riser is reputed to feel extremely virtuous all the forenoon and extremely cross all the remainder of the day, there was with us the risk that we might feel very spiritually elated for the first few days of the new régime and very bodily deflated for the rest of the time. But a slight easing up on the Spartan enthusiasm of the initial experiment served to adjust matters more satisfactorily, and we settled down to a scale as nearly as possible resembling that of Lord Devonport.

The first man to raise any serious objection to

the new system was our wardroom cook. This official is an aristocrat among ships' cooks, an artist who enjoys private pay subscribed by the officers in addition to his service pay. The mess always takes a good deal of trouble and care in the selection of its cook, since he is an individual who can do very much to make or mar the comfort of the wardroom. The last man we had was a most highly accomplished man; he could talk fluently in French, Italian, Turkish, modern Greek, Maltese, and English; he was also invariably courteous and obliging. In fact, he had only one defect—he could not cook.

But he was an exception; as a rule the specialists in this profession are very good cooks indeed. To illustrate and prove this statement let me adduce a simple but true story.

Once upon a time, in a certain flagship, the commander had occasion to find fault with the Admiral's cook, and awarded him three days of the punishment known at that time as Ten A. The Admiral very soon heard of the affair, and sent for the commander on the quarter-deck. "Who the—Why the—What the deuce do you mean by it?" stormed the incensed Admiral: "please to understand that I can get a hundred commanders like you, but only one cook like him!"

But to return to our own wardroom cook. This gentleman, though at first rather inclined to feel affronted at being asked to exercise his art upon the preparation of plain and exiguous meals, finally unbent and copied the attitude of the re-

nowned sculptor Phidias, who, when requested one day by a street urchin of ancient Athens to assist him in making mud-pies, was at first very angry, but, quickly relenting, and observing to himself, "Now to children indeed the best things are due," he stooped and deftly turned out several beautifully constructed mud-pies, to the infinite satisfaction of the child.

Greek historians generally omit this anecdote. As a matter of fact I made it up myself. But it sounds exactly like a classical story, doesn't it? And, in any case, the principle is the same.

Our chief trouble was in the matter of sugar. The mess caterer weighed out carefully the exact amount to which we were collectively entitled for the day, and if it had not been for those disgustingly greedy people who insist on taking sugar in their tea, the amount would have been amply sufficient. As it happened, however, there are certain other people—I will not mention names—who are not addicted to early rising; and these, for the first two or three mornings, found that there was no sugar left for their porridge! It is true that the mess committee provided treacle—they called it golden syrup—for this purpose; but—well, the very *sight* of porridge mixed with treacle in the early morning! I *ask* you! Besides, I do not like treacle.

Still, we got over this difficulty by apportioning to each member of the mess his weekly sugar ration, which he kept in an old tin and brought with him to the table at meal-times; and at the

end of the week we generally found, most of us, that we had what our temporary assistant paymaster called "a yield." He was something in the high finance line before the war and has been very useful in explaining to us all about the Loan and how the "yield," not the mere percentage, is the thing to be looked at.

Shall I tell you of our vegetable rissoles? They are dainty confections, mainly composed of crushed beans with tomato sauce. Or of our surfeit of blackberry-and-apple jam, which is apparently the naval equivalent of that Army plum-and-apple, the mainstay of our fighting forces on land? Or of the tears brought to the eyes of our Dyspeptic Member who used always to insist on having bread fresh from the oven by the order that it must be baked twenty-four hours before being eaten?

None of these matters will I dilate upon, but simply sum up the net results, which are, briefly, that we have discovered that we formerly ate far too much, and that we still have plenty, and never felt better in our lives!

XXXV. An Affair of Machinery

A LITTLE, little while ago I was ashore for an afternoon, and finding nothing more exciting to do I went over a distillery. The gentleman who showed me round was particularly careful to explain that none of the produce of the stills at any stage of its manufacture was fit for present consumption. After telling you this, it seems almost unnecessary to state that the locality was somewhere in Scotland.

It was a fairly large distillery, and a good deal of machinery was installed for various purposes.

"Do you employ an engineer to look after all this?" I questioned my guide.

"No precisely an engineer," he replied; "*we mak' shift wi' ha'f-breeds*!" Well, the Navy has grown to such an enormous extent since the war that we have supplemented the regular naval staff of active-service engineers by drawing largely upon volunteers from engineering works and firms ashore; and so, if these temporary officers will allow me to use the expression without offence, we too "mak' shift wi' ha'f-breeds" to assist our needs.

Only "half-breeds" so far as naval routine and ship life are concerned, be it well understood; in most cases the "Engineer Lieutenant, R.N., Tempy" is a regular *deus ex machina*—(as a classical quip I think that is rather smart!)—and an engineering expert of all sorts of qualifications. Sometimes, perhaps, he is just a little apt to make his first appearance in the engine-room rather with the air of an Edison asked to take charge of a clockwork mouse; but in a very brief space of time he discovers that there are as good engineering fish in the sea as ever stayed out of it, and there are problems and difficulties in a ship enough to engage all the attention and skill of the best man going. So, adapting himself to his new surroundings, he quickly becomes indistinguishable from the pukka old Navy hand, and proves himself a thundering good messmate into the bargain.

You might think, perhaps, that in these days of turbine engines and oil fuel there can be very little to do beyond turning a few taps and switches: everything is so simple. Exactly! There was a man, once upon a time, who said he knew all about women; they were simple creatures, perfectly easy to understand, and what knocked him was how people could make any difficulty about the matter. He fell in love after that, and then he began to learn. Well, to be attached to one of the fair is very like being appointed to a ship; and you never know how little you know until you find out by experience!

Now ours happens to be the best steaming ship

in the whole of the Grand Fleet. I trust that the mention of this fact will not disclose her identity, though I am afraid it will; especially if I add to that she is also the best shooting ship and the cleanest ship and the happiest ship. This practically gives the whole show away. No matter!

But to be the best steaming ship in the Fleet means much the same as when you say that you have got the finest crop of potatoes in the whole allotment-patch; that is, it means that you have worked hardest at it. For the engines of a battleship and their attendant engineers resemble the various members of a football team, who must learn laboriously to transform themselves into one single working unit before they are any use at all as a team, however good they may be individually.

We rattled and hurtled along—at Jutland. And down below the engines hummed a quiet tune; for turbine ships are not noisy vulgarians like those of the old "Push-and-Pull" order. And the words of the quiet tune which the turbines hummed were "Come along, you other ships, can't you keep up with me, can't you keep up with me?"

And the other ships heaved their shoulders and shoved forward through the water and did their best, and somehow managed to keep up. But why? Because down below were the experts, the engineers, watching the machinery in the same spirit of utter detachment as a bacteriologist examining a microbe culture. The incessant roar of the huge turret guns overhead was nothing to

them, nor the chance of an imminent and very unpleasant death. Their business was to attend the engines and to supervise the sweating, toiling men in engine-room and stokehole.

And so they passed that day, half-breeds and full-breeds together, temporary men and active-service. But to the half-breeds is the greater credit due; because, when all's said and done, if you enter the service for a full due you do so with your eyes open and realise that you are a "hired assassin" with risks concomitant to the position: but it is a very different matter for a man who has hitherto worked at his profession in a motor-factory or a cotton-mill.

A signal from the Admiral flicked out on the air; he wanted to detach a squadron, and wanted that squadron to steam most remarkably quickly. And if you could have looked down from the seaplane which at the moment was flying high over the fleet, you would have seen a part of the line suddenly swerve aside, just as part of a flock of starlings will sometimes swerve, and all the ships would have been seen to forge ahead with instantaneously increased speed, like a bunch of sprinters at the head of a race spurting and breaking away from the ruck behind.

That meant that down below in every several ship there was an engineer officer with a hand on a valve and an eye on a revolution indicator, and apparently fifty other hands and a hundred other eyes all fixed on as many different adjustments, playing delicately and skilfully as a virtuoso on his beloved instrument.

Not infrequently one hears, in wardroom circles, the flight and interchange of what old Homer used to call "winged words"; shafts aimed with great skill and accuracy and pointed in such a special manner that though they hit the mark and penetrate yet they never cause the slightest pain nor leave the slightest trace of a scar. For it must be understood that naval wit most frequently takes the form of remarks such as an outsider would construe as deliberate insults of a personal nature; and so perhaps they may be, in outward form; but in their inward and spiritual meaning they merely indicate a proper feeling of good fellowship. It is very much on the same lines as when a fond mother calls her babe "Little Ugly," having exhausted all the words in her vocabulary to express handsomeness and beauty; or when a schoolboy addresses his chum as "You silly rotter," meaning that he is the finest fellow in existence.

Possibly this is not a very exalted form of humour; but you cannot expect us all to be Sheridans or Chestertons—especially in war time, when we have to make the best of the scanty materials at our command in the conversational line.

So you will understand perfectly what is meant when an executive lieutenant addresses an engineering ditto in such terms as these:

"Look here you! Who gave you permission to sit on the same settee as me? Get down to your stokehole—proper place for the likes of you!"

To which the correct retort is—"And why aren't

you up on deck, or on the bridge? What's the use of my keeping the ship in the state of high efficiency down below, if you just slack about here and are too tired to stroll about on the bridge while the quartermaster does the work?"

"On the bridge?" comes the Retort Courteous. "Why, haven't I been up there the whole blessed forenoon, getting half blinded by the disgusting smoke you have been chucking up through the foremost funnel? Bad stoking, that's what it is! I can see I shall have to come below myself and teach you your job!"

Or, with special reference to one of the "half-breeds" sitting quietly in the corner of the ward-room—well within earshot, of course—"Well, I must say it's pretty hard on the Chief, having to put up with these engineering stiffs from the beach. Oh, *there* you are, Carburet! Sorry, I didn't know you were anywhere near!" (Which is, of course, obviously and openly untrue!)

To this, the Countercheck-not-at-all-quarrelsome may take the form of bodily assault; and as Mr. Carburet is frequently a hefty specimen well exercised in a strenuous life ashore, the result is not always to the advantage of the R.N.

In any case, perfect amity characterises the whole of the proceedings from start to finish.

Once, long ago, in one of the *very* old-fashioned ships, I heard the First Lieutenant gently attempting to pull the leg of a Senior Engineer by asking him:

"Why can't you build our ships like they do

those Clyde Puffers, where the captain puts the links over by himself and works everything in the engine-room from the bridge ? Then we could do without you fellows altogether ! "

I forget the precise wording of the Reproof Valiant in this case ; but nowadays, in a *very* modern ship, there is little that does not come directly or indirectly under the charge of the engineering staff.

Boats, which used to be laboriously hoisted by hand, taking nearly the whole of a ship's company to raise a cutter to the davit heads, are now swiftly hoisted in by motors. Turrets are an amazing mass of hydraulic or electrical contrivances ; and the old idea, sanctified by generations of gunnery officers, that a ship is a floating gun-platform and nothing else, has long given place to the fact that a modern battleship from stem to stern is just an affair of machinery.

And so, too, is a modern naval battle. The guns may be the decisive and final factor, but it is as well to keep in mind that you must " First catch your Herr, then cook him," and the very necessary part of first catching him devolves entirely upon the—well, there are better words than mine to express my meaning :

" It must never be forgotten, however, that the prelude to action is the work of the engine-room department, and that during action the officers and men of that department perform their most important duties without the incentive which a knowledge of the course of action gives to them on deck. . . ."

Or again,

"As usual—(note that *as usual*)—the engine-room departments of all ships displayed the highest qualities of technical skill, discipline, and endurance. High speed is a primary factor in the tactics of the squadrons under my command, and the Engine-Room departments never fail."

You may recognise the quotations. The first is from Admiral Jellicoe's despatch; the second that of Admiral Beatty.

They show, I venture to say, that the affair generally referred to by the affectionate name of "The Jutland Scrap" was very largely, like most things connected with the Navy of to-day, an Affair of Machinery.

XXXVI. Ammunition

THE ammunition-ship is alongside as I write, and we are taking in our periodical supply. It is a lengthy and laborious process, entailing a slow methodical examination of each separate round and calling for the services of a large number of men. According to the Almanack, the day of the week is Sunday; but one of my messmates remarked to me at breakfast in terms which were not quite those of a precise theologian: "Padre, it looks as if you'll have to give Church a miss in baulk this forenoon"; a prophecy which proved to be entirely correct. So far as regards our parade Service, with Church rigged on the mess-deck, we had to put into practice the sturdy maxim *Laborare est orare*—and a very fine maxim it is, too, to my thinking.

Ammunition belongs to the realms of Gunnery; and Gunnery, as everybody knows, is a thing that starts as a hobby but ends as a disease.

I cannot tell you to a hundredweight or so the exact weight of one of our largest projectiles, nor its actual value in pounds, shillings and pence; though these are matters which always excite the

curiosity of visitors from the shore. But I do know that they are delicately nurtured beings, requiring to be kept, like exotic plants, in a hot-house, if the ship is in a cold climate, and to be fanned continually, like an Indian Nabob, when the temperature rises above a certain height.

There was a captain once who was peculiarly sensitive to disturbing noises ; and one night, when he could not sleep, because of a particularly insistent and nerve-racking noise, he sent to inquire what it was.

" The magazine cooling engine," it was reported to him.

" I don't care what it is—have it stopped at once," was his immediate reply.

But the gunnery lieutenant came quickly running to him, in perturbation and pink pyjamas, to explain that unless the engine was started again quite soon, the captain would probably be disturbed by a far more unpleasant noise—namely, that of the ship being blown up ! I am told that the fan was restarted.

We have all become very learned in the terminology of warfare now. Three or four years ago it would have been necessary, as it is not now, to explain that the charge for loading all big guns is in two parts. There is the projectile itself, generally filled with some form of high explosive ; and the cartridge, whose office is to push the projectile from the gun to the target. The explosive in the cartridge has to be of a comparatively slow-burning nature, in order to get in its cumulative work up

to the very moment when the projectile finally leaves the gun; the cartridge itself becoming totally consumed in the process.

The combination reminds one of a self-sacrificing mother, gifted with no brilliant qualities of her own, who willingly allows herself and her substance to be wasted and consumed in order to launch forth her son to make a noise in the world and find his mark. Or one might compare it to the unconsidered labours of those many who are now giving themselves in noble obscurity at home that their strength may all go to add power to the striking force at the Front. All honour to these human cartridges!

Shells are painted different colours, according to the material with which they are filled; it would be quite a novel idea in dress-reform, and I think a most convenient one, if the same principle were adopted with regard to our clothes. If, for instance, the Lyddite individual, whose principal contribution to society consists of noise and gas, were obliged to wear a suit of dingy yellow; if the pushful, get-there-quickly person were recognisable by his Armour-piercing costume of dull black surmounted by a red cap; the giddy, irresponsible fellow of the Shrapnel type, whose motto is "Here goes; let's make a splash and we may hit something," being appropriately garbed in a motley of red and white stripes; and the mere dummy, the blockhead on whom all men practise, simply stitched up in a leathern jerkin.

I shall only tell you one more thing about

ammunition now; and that is, that I met the gunnery lieutenant a few minutes ago; he had been on the upper deck for hours and hours, tallying shells, examining shells, hunting for shells, surrounded by shells, dodging shells, and getting all but crushed to death by shells; he was not looking particularly cheerful; nor was his gaiety increased when at that moment a bright and beaming messmate passed by, and, clapping him merrily on the shoulder, exclaimed, "Hullo, old man; what're you suffering from—*shell shock?*"

XXXVII. Midshipman Rose Anne

THE girl-child stood with feet firmly planted on the battleship's quarter-deck, her lips slightly parted, and her big grey eyes sparkling. The little head was thrown a trifle backwards, and to one side, and every feature of the sweet young face seemed to be saying, "How splendid everything is! What shall we do next?" It was the head of a Botticelli angel, with an aureole of pale gold hair clustering in a curving mass no further than halfway down the round white neck.

The girl-child's name was Rose Anne, but ought to have been Jack, just as she ought to have been a boy; and she felt—especially at this moment—that a big mistake had been made when it was decided she should be a girl. Where was the sense of putting her into petticoats, a lithe, straight-limbed fourteen-year-old like herself, keen and active as any boy who ever enjoyed the glorious freedom and the magnificent prospect of a career which she knew quite well could never be hers?

The poignancy of this reflection was made the sharper by the fact that her brother Dicky, one

year younger, had been scampering about the ship with her all forenoon in similar activities, but with an entirely different air—an air of proprietorship.

"This battleship," his whole attitude seemed to convey, "belongs by right to Me. In a few months I shall be a cadet, after that I shall be a midshipman, and a ship like this is going to be my home. One of these days I shall be captain of a battleship. Everything here is a part of me, and I am a part of it all!"

Rose Anne could not say that. O miserable fate! Yet there was none of the things Dicky had done that morning which she had not done, too—some of them better and quicker. It was she who led the way up the mast into the foretop, climbing as nimbly as any sailor, and never quailing to look back at the deck a hundred feet below. She had wriggled her way through the manhole into a turret, and never squeaked when she bumped her head against a corner on getting in. Dicky had done the same thing, but he had said "Wow!" She crawled around the stokehole, where she handled a shovel to the speechless delight of the chief stoker of the watch, who had never before seen a fairy thing like that down below, and who was observed afterwards turning that shovel over and over in his horny hands, smiling at it, and talking to himself, as if some magical touch had been imparted to that humble instrument. Then she made the yeoman of the watch supervise her semaphoring, while with his hand flags she solemnly and seriously spelt out "Good morning, how are

you ? " True, she made a Q instead of a Y, but the yeoman " never let on." Down in the submerged flat, on deck again, examining the breech-mechanism of a six-inch gun—was there anywhere Rose Anne did not go that forenoon, or anything which did not seem to her the very acme and crown of delightfulness ?

Now, however, mingling with all the niceness of everything, there came a taste of bitter-sweet. The big grey eyes suddenly filmed with moisture, and the parted lips breathed a sigh.

" Why, what's the matter ? " queried her guide, one Sub-Lieutenant Darley Spencer, a tall young fellow with a nice ugly face. The girl-child looked up at him wistfully and uttered her plaint—" All of it—not for me ! "

How well Darley Spencer understood the meaning of those words, remembering how once he reckoned on a like miserable blank future, when he failed at his first entrance examination and his guardian threatened to put him into an office.

" Never mind, old chap," he said.

Rose Anne brightened up considerably at being called " old chap " ; but Darley Spencer had a better consolation still to offer.

" I'll tell you what you *can* be," said he. " I am the Sub. of the gunroom, and the fellows there have to do just what I tell them. I'll make them elect you Honorary Midshipman of this ship ! "

" Oh, can you ? Will you ? " breathlessly exclaimed Rose Anne.

" Consider it done already," said her friend.

"Wait a minute—I'll show you." He beckoned to a junior midshipman.

"Come here, Tubby," he ordered. "Now tell me, who is this?"

"That is Rose Anne," answered Tubby sheepishly.

"Stupid, I don't mean who is she, but what is she?"

"A girl, I suppose," said Tubby.

"That's just where you make your mistake, young fellow. You junior snotties think you know everything. Understand now, please, this is Midshipman Rose Anne, of this ship. Savvy? Then go and tell all the other snotties, and have a place laid for our new midshipman at lunch."

Rose Anne whirled round upon her benefactor with tempestuous gratitude. "Oh, you are the—the—I don't know what to call you!" she cried. "But tell me, what shall I have to do to be an Honorary Midshipman?"

"Well, just on general lines," said Spencer, "I should say that all you have to do is to play the game, go straight, and keep up the honour of the ship."

Rose Anne listened, and seemed on a sudden to change from a child into a woman. In her eyes dawned the look of a visionary. "Yes, and I'll tell you one thing more," she said: "when things seem hopeless, still keep on digging out!"

Next moment she became a child again, and dashed off towards the gunroom, dragging Spencer after her.

All that was three years before the war.

The battleship was sunk at the Dardanelles. Rose Anne's small brother had attained the glory of a midshipman afloat, and was serving in his first ship, a cruiser attached to the Grand Fleet; and Rose Anne herself, working her way fast through her teens, had arrived at nineteen years, and was at last reconciled to the fate of not being a boy. She still cherished a great pride, however, in the honorary rank given her in days that now seemed ages and ages ago, and wept many a sympathetic tear when her old ship went down.

As for Darley Spencer, he was in command of a destroyer. Bucketing about the North Sea on patrol duty—what a dog's life it was; soaked to the skin continually and unable to get a decent meal for days together! Yet Spencer would not have exchanged the life for that of a millionaire. There was always the chance of a smack at the Huns.

Well, the chance came. And it looked more like the Hun having a smack at Spencer than Spencer having a smack at the Hun. Three "torpedo-booten" suddenly put in an appearance one grey morning, and Darley Spencer, finding himself unsupported, ought to have made for safety till he could summon assistance. But British sailors never do have any sense of that sort; that is why they have won in all naval wars. In half an hour, one German boat was at the bottom, another, badly crippled, had turned tail, and the third, not caring for the job of carrying on alone, decided to accompany her.

Darley Spencer's boat was still above water, but that was about all that could be said for her. She was holed in the engine-room and quite unable to steam, and the wireless was carried away. The water was slowly gaining, and the dead and wounded were lying about the deck. The only chance of getting back was to take to the boats and abandon ship.

"We shall have to do it, I suppose," he said ruefully. "There's no other way out."

Then there leapt to his mind the vision of a girl-child who had once said: "When things seem hopeless, still keep on digging out!" Darley clenched his teeth and nodded savagely. "We'll have a shot for it, anyhow!" he said.

When the destroyer entered harbour under sail —sail made up of awnings and deck-cloths and odd scraps of canvas—and was beached on a flood tide, the tale was in all mouths. The destroyer's skipper got the D.S.O. for it.

"But," he said. "the whole credit really belongs to Rose Anne." So he went off to tell her about it.

A new rank has been created of recent years by the Admiralty—that of mate. Rose Anne has been promoted to this rank from that of midshipman. And her rank is no longer honorary. She is a real mate now—Darley Spencer's mate.

XXXVIII. The Women

HONOURS for some, and medals for all,
after the war is ended,
Praise for the living, and glorious fame
for the brave at rest;
What for those who deserve the most, the
patient, the splendid
Women, who suffered the worst and bore it the
best?

You—whose laurelled brows are by modest
memories shaded,
Knowing how battles can fashion a hero against
his will,
Almost without his knowledge—could you have
done as they did,
Send their dearest away, their own task just to
sit still?

Send you away, and hearten you up, aiming at one
thing only,
Just to keep back the tears and let you see
nought but a smile,
Then live on, not knowing whether the fate to be
lonely
Was to be theirs for ever or but for a while.

Great though your heart may be, there is one that is always greater
Hid in the bosom of her who waits for the glad day when
With a long-drawn sigh of relief and praise to the great Creator
She shall know that the war she hates is over at last, and then

Greet you with open arms, welcome, and loving laughter,
Proud of her man, and reckoning nothing her own long pain ;
Or, if need be, uncomplainingly wait for a glad hereafter,
When the dear angel Death shall take her to you again.

XXXIX. *Time and the Hour*

AVOIDING for the present all theological subjects and steering well clear of Eternity—on which I have my own ideas, and a pretty lot of trouble they would probably get me into—my present aim is to accept Poet Shelley's challenge and put forth on that unfathomable sea whose waves are years; in other words, to write about Time—a subject which is of vast importance to all seamen.

We keep all sorts of mechanical devices on board for the accurate measurement of time. The other day I read about a man who sailed round the world in a thirty-foot boat, single-handed, and with no better time-keeper than a ninepenny tin clock. Of course, I read this aloud to Navvy—but his only comment was a sniff; the rest was silence. *He* cannot manage to get along without several highly trained chronometers, which are kept in a special boudoir of their own, and fed on lamb chops and cream; a touching little ceremony is enacted daily when the solemnity occurs at which report is made that the chronometers are well and truly wound—a function featuring the Sergeant-Major

of Marines as the principal dramatis persona; though why on earth he, of all men in the ship, should be chosen for the job is one of those inscrutable mysteries whose solution is past finding out; but it is a naval custom, and always has been so.

Besides the chronometers, there are also deck-watches, very fascinating and covetable, and these also have their pedigree entered in the stud-book, so it is not advisable to lose one overboard, however much you may feel tempted to do so, as it will cost you twenty-five pounds.

We also have some clocks in the wardroom and the ante-room, but these won't work; indeed, I never knew a wardroom clock that would. These however, are not officially entered in the ship's books; they are only conscripts or volunteers, not belonging to the regular ancient Navy, and only join under the same conditions as the Crystal Palace Navy—whose members, it may be appropriate to mention here—are sometimes known by the delightful name of "Wrist-Watch Sailors."

Routine, no less than Navigation, is entirely dependent upon the accurate measurement of time; a ship's daily work is mapped out to the exact minute, and therefore it is quite necessary to have a reliable standard by which to work.

Possibly our being brought up to this system makes us hold rather an exaggerated idea of the position which Time holds in the scheme of things. I was talking on the subject, some little while ago, with our Junior Surgeon. He is a devoted admirer of Omar Khayyam—and I am not; so there we had

a very good starting-point for an amicable and enlightening conversation. He, of course, shoved his oar in first with a long-winded quotation of stanza after stanza, which he reeled off in an ecstatic and maudlin manner with his eyes half-closed and his head wagging—all Omarites do this, you may have noticed.

For my part, I retaliated that if it had not been for Fitzgerald's beautiful verse no one would have looked twice at the rubbish—mere chaff in a setting of gold. That was a poor effort at metaphor, I am willing to admit now, but I couldn't think of a better at the time. Then, skilfully countering another series of feebly aimed quotations, I got in some pretty work on the point by observing that there was more wit and wisdom in a single chapter of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes than in the whole of that stuff which is so exactly like the kind of thing that might be written by a fourth-form boy posing as a man of the world.

And, by the way, I *do* wish that some enterprising publisher would bring out Proverbs and Ecclesiastes in limp green calf, duodecimo, under the title of " The Wisdom of Suleiman Ben Daoud." It is a solemn fact that this was once done with the book of Esther—the publisher to whom it was submitted in manuscript thought it a perfect scream of an Oriental yarn, and made a tremendous success of it. And I am sure that the " Wisdom " would be even more successful; these Eastern philosophies are *so* popular, and it seems a pity

that the best of them should remain unknown to the general public.

The Junior Surgeon, however, was not to be put off by such remarks; and, unperturbed, went on to inform me that the Moving Finger writes; and, having writ, moves on. Adding that not all your Piety nor Wit nor all your Tears can wash out a Word of it.

"There," said I, "you have a flagrant instance of the meretricious quality of your pseudo-philosopher. It *sounds* all right, of course, very deep and very solemn; but it happens to be entirely untrue! All the great prophets and teachers in the world have laboured to preach this almost more than anything else, that the Past is *always* retrievable; that it is the greatest of mistakes to measure Life by Time and not by heart-beats. Seen in their true perspective, all yesterdays and all to-morrows are as much in the picture as the by no means unforgiving minute. Time, after all, is only a convention; it has no real existence; objectively, there is no such thing as——"

"——Eleven o'clock, gentlemen, please," called out the Ship's Corporal, entering the mess to make this announcement in accordance with established regulation. I must admit this rather took the wind out of my sails, and it certainly looked as though a victory over nice theory might be claimed by cold brutal fact.

Yet I hold me to the theory; for if, now, I were to say to the Vali of Smyrna that it is three

bells in the last dog, he would marvel that one could utter such strange talk and be so ignorant in this year of the Hegira; and it is just possible that one day, when we shall have no further use for that childish concept of time which is here so convenient a tool, there will be found powers and principalities who have never needed so clumsy an instrument; and these will smile uncomprehendingly at us when we prate of bygone years; will tell us that our past lies all before us to redeem.

XL. *Ports and Happy Havens*

THERE is a great difference between them, a difference of the same nature as that which exists between choirs and places where they sing. Unless you happen to possess that contented mind which enables you to irritate your more meanly equipped neighbours by declaring continually that What's Good Enough for Nelson is Good Enough for You, and that you don't care whether it's Christmas or Easter; or, in other words, if you are not endowed with that frigid, bloodless type of mind which is its own place, and can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven, then the indisputable fact remains that *some* ports are Perfectly Beastly.

The ports whose acquaintance I have been fated to make since the war come mostly under this heading. We had, at one time, an enthusiastic amateur photographer in the mess, whose delight it was to make pictures of every possible kind of ship in every possible position. Row upon row of ship photographs adorned our wardroom, and each day brought fresh pictures—which, indeed, so closely resembled those of the day before that

it was scarcely possible to know the difference. And the enthusiast, of course, expected us to admire them all! But one day the young doctor turned upon him in exasperation and exclaimed, "Be blowed to your eternal ships! Why can't you let us have a picture of a row of shops to look at instead!"

I confess he had my sympathy; though shops in themselves are not sufficient to transform a Port into a Happy Haven; nor, even, are hotels.

There was one of the latter in a certain port I visited not long ago, a homely hostelry into which I wandered to get tea. At the next table to my own were seated two or three midshipmen and a sub. Before them was spread a goodly array of scones, bread and butter, and marmalade. Now it happened that one of the midshipmen did not greatly care for marmalade, and his soul longed for jam. So he beckoned to the waiter, a man who looked like one who would condemn the works of Carlyle as frivolous light reading, and he politely asked if he might not have some jam.

The waiter eyed him with a disapproving glare, and replied, "Ye'll tak' what ye're given."

And with that he stalked away majestically, and for my part I ate my marmalade and said nothing about it, though I do not care for it at tea-time any more than the midshipman did.

Yet to leave even such a port as this for certain other ports not unknown to us makes one inclined to say, "Farewell, happy fields! Hail, horrors! hail, Infernal World!" Such I will not attempt

to describe; though how many thousand times happier are they than those other naval ports on the further shores of the "German Ocean," where the war lords of the sea sit designing or exhorting glorious war but never getting any further on than that!

But you must not think that we are without experience of Happy Havens, even in war time. Noting the fact that consistency is the bugbear of little minds, you will allow me to contradict myself, and state that any old port can be a top-hole place if you're there with the right crowd of fellows; and as this happens to be the case in this ship, I have nothing to complain of concerning any of the ports where we may happen to drop anchor.

Yet, of course, in spite of the delights spread for the sailormen in ports both at home and abroad; familiar joys or the strange wonders of furrin' parts; there is really only *one* Happy Haven to which their minds are ever turning.

An old naval saying, which can be seen illustrated by crude coloured prints in the back-street shops of Gosport and Moricetown, states of a ship coming home to pay off that "The girls are on the tow-rope"; and to the Saturday-night-at-sea toast of "Sweethearts and Wives" the sailor's heart and voice respond with unchanging sincerity. And where the shore end of the tow-rope lies, where the dear objects of his toast have their home, *there* is the one Happy Haven for Jack and his officers.

They will come back home—some day. Not all of them, though; for many have voyaged further. And, of your charity, it is to these your thoughts will turn—for their voyaging was for your sakes—when next you say, "So He bringeth them to the Haven where they would be."

XLI. The "Navy List"

THERE is a very fascinating book over which I pored with much delight in the days of my youth, but I have never come across it again since then ; it is Disraeli's "Curiosities of Literature," a fat volume that must have entailed endless pains in its compilation. It deals with almost every imaginable fashion and freak in the world of letters ; but—it says not a word about one of the greatest of all literary curiosities, the "Navy List."

There are so many curious points about this remarkable volume that I hardly know where to begin. On the score of age alone it is most noteworthy, being one of the oldest periodical publications in the kingdom. At a time when the *Gentleman's Magazine* was a new venture the "Navy List" was already an institution of long standing—and vastly more entertaining ! Go into any naval club, and you will find on the shelves of its library a row of little thin volumes, dating back a century and more, early types of the bulky tome to which the "Navy List" has now grown ; they belong to the times when there were

Admirals of the Red, the White, and the Blue—and three ranks of each; when chaplains were paid at a rate of so much per head of the ship's company, so that it must have been a matter of some importance to one of my predecessors whether he were appointed to a "first-rater" or a "fifth-rater."

Even these club treasures do not represent by any means the earliest issues of the "Navy List"; its origin is lost in the mists of antiquity, and to find out the actual date of its first appearance one would probably have to inquire of that valuable society, whose excellent research work is so little known or appreciated, the Naval Records Society.

But, to turn from ancient history to modern instances, the "Navy List" of the present age is chock-full of interest and entertainment. No book is in greater demand in the wardroom; when the picture papers pall and sevenpennies satiate, you can always turn to the well-thumbed book in the torn covers of light-blue paper and find something of interest, with the certainty that some other officer, wishing he had thought of it before you did, will at once say, "After you with the 'Navy List,' old man!"

One of the most favourite games that can be played with the "Navy List" is called *Looking Out Your Next Billet.* I *have* seen this game played by sticking a pin blindly amongst the list of ships, after the manner of the Key and Bible divination formerly practised by the devoutly superstitious. But the more general custom is to

go at the matter deliberately, with the aid of a stump of pencil and the back of an envelope, turning over the pages to the accompaniment of a running commentary of this nature: "Now, the *Ariadne* would suit me very well; no, she won't be vacant for another eighteen months; that silly ass Bifkins has only been there since the beginning of the year. Well, then, there's the *Pylades*; I wouldn't mind going to the *Pylades* at all! Let's see, who's her skipper? What! Old Weeping William? *No*, I couldn't stick *him* at any price! What about the *Naiad*? Ah, no, I see they've shifted her to—good heavens, that would never do at all! Fancy being stuck in a ghastly place like that!" And so on; till, finally, after having eliminated the impossibles, the player chooses a list of desirable billets—and, of course, finds himself sent to a ship he had never even dreamt about!

That game fell into disuse at the commencement of the war. Since then the "Navy List" has been issued without its usual catalogue of ships, for obvious reasons, and this Dummy List, as we irreverently call it, affords no facilities for indulging in this peculiar pastime, even if we wished to—which we don't, since the principle that governs everybody in war time is Do what you are Told, and Go where you are Wanted.

The "Quarterly Navy List" contains a large amount of additional matter. It has a lengthy list of Retired Officers, in which you can see the names of shipmates and station-mates of bygone

days, and meditate enviously on their idyllic existence—from which they have been called, very many of them, like Cincinnatus from his plough.

Here, too, in this fat quarterly, you can derive a melancholy satisfaction from calculating the amount of pension to which your widow will become entitled; you can study the Prize Money regulations, and wonder whether you will ever touch a single red cent; you can learn up the uniforms of every branch of the Service, with many quaint corollaries, such as that chaplains in full dress are apparently not expected to go out of doors, since no form of headgear is specified for wearing with the courtly rig. You can look with amazement at the number of articles which a bluejacket must have in his possession, and wonder how on earth he ever managed to amass the wealth to pay for them before this recent and blessed order about free kit was promulgated. You can wander in imagination through all the naval dockyards and hospitals, here set forth to view in print, and can revel in the romantic names of the Kroomen and Seedie-boys employed in certain foreign establishments—Tom Upside-down, Dick Ginger-beer, and the like; in fact, there is scarcely any end to the varied amusements to be obtained from this remarkable book.

Even the monthly list has lately attained such huge proportions that one could probably do a pretty bit of profiteering by buying it at its published price of eighteen pence and selling it again for waste paper.

But this increased size is due to a cause that does not bear to be spoken of lightly; so much of it is attributable to the list—large, indeed, now, and ever getting larger—of officers and men killed in action. This naval Roll of Honour comes, rightly enough, at the beginning of the book; for in a volume which deals so closely with the many duties of a sailor pride of place should be given to those gallant men who have fulfilled the first and greatest of all duties.

XLII. A Pathetic Appeal

" WON'T someone talk to these English, please ?
The nasty cowards, they rule the seas
In a most tyrannical, bullying way,
Quite unjustifiable—so *we* say !
They're stopping our imports—copper and lead,
Sulphur and iron, and even bread !
But we *need* the metals for shot and shell
To smash their contemptible Army well ;
And how can our soldier-heroes fight
Without their food ? Oh, it isn't right !
Such a cowardly, low, mean, underhand trick
Makes the soul of an honest Hun nigh sick !
So please step in, and make a fuss,
And give the Command of the Seas to *us* ! "

But the Neutrals all replied with a grin,
" Now why in the world should *we* butt in ?
If you're short of bullets, or things to eat,
Go and *take* them—you've got a fleet ! "

" Nay," said the Teuton, " don't you see
What a foolish proceeding that would be ?

For to fight with odds of one to two
Is the mad kind of thing that the *British* might do;
But the German idea of genuine fun
Is to fight with the odds of two to one;
And we cannot exactly see our way
To bringing this off till some future Day.
So won't you *please* see justice done
To a poor, misunderstood, ill-used Hun?
We're bottom dog now, but we *want* to be top—
Do talk to the English, and *make* them stop!"

XLIII. Shovel-Nosed T.B.'s

MOST people of the Old Navy have at least a nodding acquaintance with the ancient craft known as Shovel-nosed T.B.'s.

"T.B.'s," of course, means torpedo-boats, and these particular ones are called shovel-nosed for the reason that—well, because they *are* shovel-nosed, that's all.

They were built long ago in the prehistoric days before anyone had evolved the idea of building a class of super-torpedo-boats which should be fast and strong enough to catch and destroy the T.B.'s, for which cause the name of destroyers was to be given in course of time to this yet unborn class of vessels.

Then the destroyers were built, a few at a time, and a brilliant idea came to birth simultaneously: why not make *all* torpedo-craft destroyers? Why have T.B.'s at all, since the larger craft could do all that the smaller ones had done and a bit more besides? Obviously, to build both was like cutting a big hole in the door for the cat and a little one for the kitten; and there was the additional inducement that if you have no destroyables to destroy,

the destroyers of the enemy would not be able to do any destroying ; so no more T.B.'s were built.

But the old Shovel-nosed T.B.'s still remained, and, as I remarked, there are few Old Navyites who have not known something about them and have feelings towards them of pride and pleasure—or very much the reverse.

It is, for instance, a highly pleasurable thing to be in supreme command of Your Own Ship, even when that ship measures no more than sixty feet by ten. The Shovel-nosed T.B.'s started life as lieutenants' commands—though they came down to warrant-officers' commands afterwards—and many a young two-striper cocked a chest in the olden days when he found himself appointed to H.M.T.B. number so-and-so, his first independent command.

From the other point of view they were not regarded as unmixed blessings by watch-keepers who looked down on them from the bridge of a battleship to see them scurrying across his bows in a happy-go-lucky style which threatened three or four simultaneous and unavoidable collisions, involving the total wreck of one or more of H.M.T.B.'s—for which the honest watch-keeper cared very little—and the equally imminent wreck of his own career, for which he cared a very great deal.

I will say nothing of the cares and worries of the E.R.A.'s—pensioned men by this time, and grandfathers, most of 'em—who, in return for the glory of lording it as the engineer-commanders of a box

of tricks about the size of a packing-case, had to wrestle for their salvation with the diabolical vagaries of the machinery contained therein.

My own acquaintance with the shovel-nosed craft was altogether of the pleasantest. They had, by the time I met them, already fallen from their first high estate, and were divided into batches of half a dozen or less, scattered about on different naval stations, each batch being under the general supervision of a lieutenant.

Those which I met were based on Malta and were employed for training Maltese stoker-ratings of the Royal Naval Reserve. They had a regular routine of going out to sea for a few hours three times a week during the summer months, and, since it made no difference where the little vessels went so long as they were under way for the requisite number of hours, it was sometimes possible—given the right combination of circumstances—to turn the service sea-trip into a very pleasant picnic party.

What more delightful than to steam smoothly over the azure waters of the Mediterranean on board a trim vessel which is for the time being your own steam yacht to all intents and purposes ? A yacht which is manned and maintained for you with proverbial Navy smartness and cleanliness, and graced by the presence of fair ladies, whose delight in the novelty of this tiny man-o'-war makes them more charming, if possible, than ever ? The courteous warrant officer in command is ready to take you anywhere you wish within the limits of

his time. Perhaps St. Paul's Bay is not far enough for you; then what about a visit to Migiarro, the quaint and picturesque port of Gozo? Or you may choose to make for Ramla Bay, where the water is crystal clear for fathoms deep, shoaling gently to a glorious beach of dark golden sand, an ideal place for a bathe while the torpedo-boat anchors for the dinner hour. Was ever such gold and blue, and such sunshine over all?

And, on the way home, if there is time to go round the north of Gozo, the officer in command has a little surprise for the picnic party. He keeps close in to the iron cliffs and suddenly swings eight points towards them, and before there is time to wonder why he is desirous of ramming the island the little vessel has dashed through a narrow opening in the walls and you find yourself in a tiny circular lagoon surrounded by high and unclimbable rocks, a place that reminds you of nothing so much as of the pictures of mine-craters half-filled with rain.

Happy days they were, the days of those sea-picnics!

. . . . . .

In a very different clime I was ashore one afternoon recently and discovered a cottage where the gudewife was willing to provide tea, with beautiful bannocks and scones. Her cottage was on a slope facing the sea, the grey sea of the North. A spinning wheel stood in the corner of the spotless little parlour; and on one side of the room was a deep recess with a pair of neat white curtains

looped back, showing a bed that completely filled the space within : and a very snug bed it must be, too, in the winter, for it is cold there, up in the northern mists. And what a tea we had ! On board, we ration ourselves voluntarily and keep well within the limits. But I think it is quite fair to have a real blow-out now and then when we go ashore, don't you ? Fresh eggs, drop scones, oat-cakes and butter, sweet fresh butter, the biggest treat of all !

Another visitor came in for tea while I was there. His face seemed familiar, but I could not put a name to him at the first moment. However, he was before me, with a " Hullo ! weren't you out in Malta a few years ago ? "

" Yes," I answered, " and of course I know you too. You were in charge of the Shovel-nosed T.B.'s, weren't you ? "

Then, piecing together what I already knew with what he told me, I gathered the details of the story, much of which has already appeared in the offically published records, the story of the little boats and their glorious career in their latter days. How they were present at the fighting in the Suez Canal ; how they afterwards went across to Gallipoli, and did great deeds in both places. And how some of them finished the full tale of their long and honourable service with a very glorious ending ; one, for example, struck a mine and went down ; another was destroyed by shell fire. They had put up a good fight, both of them, as did all the others of their class.

But the fine thing is that the remainder of them are still serving: stout little, brave little boats; cruising and patrolling and as good as ever. Still upholding the glory of the White Ensign that has floated over them so many years!

XLIV. Rewards and Decorations

IT is only a small mind that despises medals and stars, crosses, ribbons, and such like; a smaller mind still, infinitely smaller, that merely affects to despise them. You may talk as much high faluting stuff as you please about the deed being greater than the reward, and all that sort of thing: everybody knows that, especially everybody whose deeds are worth rewarding; but, after all, it *is* rather nice to have something to show for what you have done! No, not quite that; nice to know that others have recognised what you have done. That is not quite right yet, but, anyway, it *is* nice to be able to sport some sort of ribbon on your chest!

I suppose it was this feeling that animated a certain admiral who was once in command on a foreign station. He had not many ribbons to boast of, and finding himself now in a part of the world where things happen, he said he would be hanged if he was going home without a medal, so he heard of a native insurrection, and he suppressed it. And he got his medal.

Let us hope that this story is entirely untrue.

At any rate, I went to the same foreign station myself immediately after, but nothing of the kind happened in *my* time !

Platitudinously speaking, the very greatest deeds frequently go unrewarded—(my own chest is bare : the chest of my coat, I mean). Also, such decorations as are given to men seem not unseldom to be whacked out by a mysterious Providence which rains them indiscriminately upon the good and the evil : in which connection I would relate a really malicious yarn of a fleet-mate who not long ago was given a certain Order. To him came ship-visiting one day an officer from the same fleet who knew him well, and had, moreover, been through precisely the same experiences—or lack of them. The visitor tactfully opened the conversation with, " Hullo, old chap, I see you're wearing a bit of ribbon now ! *What on earth did you get it for* ? "

Some slight acquaintance with the colours and patterns of medal ribbons is desirable before discussing them in public. Recently a lieutenant told me how, in conversation with a post-captain, he had very forcibly expressed his gladness at the fact that he was *not* the possessor of either the Birthday or the Wigga-Wagga medal ; and it was not until afterwards that he discovered that the ribbons the captain was wearing were those belonging to these very medals ; and further, that these were the only ones he possessed ! So the poor lieutenant will probably go unforgiven for the rest of his days. There are some blunders

which are only made worse by explanations and apologies.

Paradox appears to have singled out medals and decorations as the special subjects of its most freakish whimsicalities. To begin with, it is paradoxical enough to term such things "honours," when they are no more than the recognition of a deed honourably done. I can think of no parallel case to such a curious misuse of a word. If the same verbal process were general then the pennies given us in our childhood for having a tooth pulled out ought to have been called reliefs, and our spankings at school bad behaviours; but we are more prosaic than to introduce quaint grammaticisms into ordinary everyday life—such things are reserved for the elfin land of Medalia.

Curious, too, that officers of the Navy and Army should be the only individuals in the fighting forces of the Crown who do not get a medal for long and meritorious service. Volunteer officers get one; so also do non-commissioned officers, petty officers, and men of both Navy and Army; but regular officers are the only people who can spend the best part of a lifetime in their country's service without earning a treasured little disc of metal to hand down to their children as a token of their life's work.

And is it not paradoxical that of all countries in the world the one which has always exercised the most rigid discrimination in selecting the favoured recipients of its highest Orders should be,

not proud England, nor haughty Spain, nor aristocratic Austria, but China?

However, the Chinese are not the only people who are particular in this respect; though perhaps we shall be safer in detecting a quaint touch of Oriental humour, rather than discriminative selection, in the fact that our former friends, the Turks, once thought fit to present a high-born English dame of the most icy Anglican rectitude with the Order of Chastity *of the Third Class!*

Medals of a merely commemorative nature and unofficial decorations sometimes possess as great an interest as those which are awarded by authority. As a nation we do not affect these very greatly. There is, of course, the very handsome medal designed by the Marquis of Milford Haven in commemoration of the Jutland Battle. But we have not multiplied medals of this class to mark every event of magnitude as the Germans have; but possibly this calls for a peculiar habit of mind—a mind that can employ artistic skill in designing a medal to commemorate the sinking of the *Lusitania,* with drowning women and children complete.

We have in our gun-room two very honourable and exclusive Orders; I am proud to say that I have been made a member of one of them. It is the Order of the Wild Curate.

But if any naval officer of your acquaintance should ever show you a medal having on one side the design of a cherry tree and a large concourse of people trailing off into the distance, then gaze

on the sacred thing with all proper solemnity, and ask your friend how he came to earn it ; but perhaps he will be too diffident to tell you. It is of the class of unofficial awards, but one that is exceedingly highly prized—the famous Cherry medal.

XLV. A Sailor on Horseback

IT was the Port-Admiral's coxswain who told me this story, and, as you must know, an admiral's coxswain is invariably a highly respectable and staid individual who would no more tell an untruth than he would say a cross word to an ash-boat for scraping along the side of the Admiral's barge.

"You may have noticed, sir," he said, "that on the various occasions when the Senior Service comes into contack with the Army, as, for instance, at Galley Polly an' Sally Neek an' one or two other places in this present war o' grace, as the sayin' is, there frequently occurs a pleasing interchange o' compliments between the naval and the military Commander-in-Chiefs, each one butterin' the other up and both in turn sayin' what a fine feller the other one is and how the whole perishin' picnic would have been a proper pot-mess if it hadn't a-been for him. Similarly, the other man rounds on him as if they was swoppin' lies for a prize, an' ups an' says that if he'd had to do it on his own without help from any other party his name would have been Mud, in a manner o' speakin'."

"I *have* noticed something of the sort, in official despatches," I remarked.

"No doubt you have, sir; and equally so, the mutual palaverin' may be generally well meant an' well earnt. But I have in mind an occasion when the Navy an' the Army didn't exactly square yards in that same spirit o' brotherly love, an' it was the two Chief Brass 'Ats of 'em both what was at the bottom of it all.

"It was at this same port it happened, too; not with the present Admiral, but the one before him. He's retired on his pension now, and they do say that he joined the Parish Council of his village church and started the very first week by putting the vicar in the bishop's report for his Romanisin' practices. That'll tell you he weren't a man to stand no nonsense!

"Now, at the same time, there was a General Commanding the District stationed here who was a 'oly terror in his dealin's with everybody except his wife, an' *she* used to lead him an' 'ell of a—— she was a very masterful lady; but you must ha' noticed that it's very often the way in such cases, sir.

"This 'ere General, he was what they calls a Stern Marionette to all under his command, and particular to the young subawlterns; in the days when there was nothin' but the Contemptible Little Army he was bad enough, but when the new lot come along—well, they do say that he nearly chucked a fit one day when one of 'em was brought up before him on joinin' the regiment an' stuck out

his hand to shake with 'Is Nibs, sayin', 'Pleased to meet you, I'm sure!'

"But, as often 'appens, it was a very small matter that started the great bargin' match between him an' my man. There was a young subawltern of the army an' a naval lootenant what had been out huntin' foxes together, an' they was comin' home ridin' side by side down Broad Street when the General sees 'em.

"'Wot!' 'e says—leastways, I didn't exactly hear him myself like, but I take it 'e says 'Wot,' or words to that effect, 'a young unfledged cub of a miserable converted civilian who didn't know the meanin' o' Form Fours a month ago, an' with no more than one star on his sleeve, ridin' a-norseback as if 'e was a bloomin' staff-orfcer! Blimy if I stand it,' says he. An' off 'e goes straight 'ome an' 'e writes out an Order of the Day statin' as how such a noutrage couldn't be permitted no longer in 'Is Majesty's Army. And 'e ends up with the words: 'This *Order is to apply to Naval Officers also.*'

"I don't suppose you can imagine what the Port Admiral said when he saw this, because you've been very well brought up an' wouldn't probably know the meanin' o' such expressions. But you can at any rate grasp the fact that the Admiral wasn't the man to sit down calmly under such a nigh-'anded meddlin' with the rights an' privileges of H.M. Navy.

"Nobody dursn't go near him all that forenoon, and two captains o' ships lyin' in the Roads what

blew in to see him all heedless an' unsuspectin' like was ordered to complete to full stowage an' proceed to sea immediate, which, as they'd both been paintin' ship the day before, was calculated to upset the tempers of a more easy-goin' pair than what they looked when they came out again.

"But at lunch time the old man had calmed down a little, and after his second glass of port he even begins to have a smile on his face. Just about this stage in the proceedings he turns to his Flag-Lootenant and says, 'What you young fellers want,' he says, 'is exercise, and plenty of it.'

"'Yes, sir,' says the Flag Jack, not knowing what the old boy was aiming at.

"'You young officers don't take *enough* exercise,' goes on the Admiral.

"'No, sir,' says Flags, still not tumbling to the hint, and wondering what on earth he was expected to say.

"Then the Admiral speaks out more plain like. 'In *my* young days,' he says, 'we used to think there was nothing like *horse* exercise; all the doctors say it's the finest thing out for the liver.'

"Well, if a Flag Jack can't shape a course when he's been given such bearin's as that, it stands to reason he wouldn't never have *been* picked out to wear the gilded aygletties, doesn't it? So he ups an' says, 'It would be a very good thing, sir, if *all* the officers of the port were to practise ridin'; never know when it might come in useful.'

"'Very good thing, indeed,' says the Admiral,

'an' there's a lovely bit of road for practisin' leadin' right past the General's house.'

"Well, of course, this was a tip for the Flag Loot to pass the word to all the N.O.'s of the district. How would he do it? Oh, I d'know; but I suppose a Flag Jack has got his scouts, same as anybody else."

"So I take it," said I, "that there was a great equestrian procession in the town that afternoon, eh? And what did the General say to it?"

"Nothin' at all, sir. There weren't no procession, nor a single naval officer on norseback. The Admiral, o' course, fully believed that the whole manœuvres was carried out accordin' to his memo, so to say. He was *meant* to believe it; but, naturally, that's what a Flag Lootenant is *for*!"

"Then what happened?" I asked, slightly mystified.

"Why, when I said that not a single N.O. went a-norse-ridin' that day, I was makin' a menthol reservation, as the sayin' is. There was *one*. That was the Flag Jack, who was on very friendly terms with the General's daughter. Him an' her went off ridin' together, and I fancy that in the course of the afternoon he must have told her off to talk reason into *her* old man and he'd see after the Admiral. It must have been something like that, because the two old gentlemen became quite pals shortly after, an' they was arm-in-arm at the weddin'. Wot? Oh, yes, the young people was married within three months of the row."

"Strange," I mused, "that I never heard any-

thing of the affair, and yet I was on leave down here from my ship just at the time you say it all took place ! "

" Wot ? " ejaculated the Admiral's coxswain, " *you* in the Navy, sir ? Well, if I'd a-known that I'd never a-thought o' spinnin' that yarn to *you* ! "

He was evidently much chagrined. But I found means to appease him. Belonging, like himself, to a resourceful profession, I remembered that one can proverbially ride through an Act of Parliament, and that if a Sailor on Horseback can ride to the Devil it might be possible to ride through the Non-Treating Act !

XLVI. One of the Old Breed

THIS is partly a story of the famous old *Calliope,* but not the deathless story of how she fought her way out of a Samoan harbour in the teeth of a hurricane ; *that* story is too well known to all the world to need retelling, and no one—no true seaman especially—is ever likely to forget the stirring deed.

But it is of the same ship and the same commission of which I write. No, I was not there myself ; I am not *quite* so old as that ! Why, that storm in Apia was in the mid-'nineties ; and of all those who were in the old *Calliope* that day the great majority must have either joined a still greater majority or else must be frail and feeble old men by this time.

It is a far cry from Samoa to Virtuous Lady Mine. What, don't you know where that is ? Then, if so, you don't know one of the most lovely spots in the whole of the west country, which, of course, is one of the most beautiful places in the whole of the world. And here was I, some few weeks ago, on leave from the Northern Mists, together with some others who made the bright place brighter still.

Oh, but what a change from the North Sea and the noise of a crowded battleship! This must surely have been the original "land where it was always afternoon," so dreamy-still and warmly sweet the air; no sound but the drowsy cadence of the rushing streams, where the Walkham flows beneath a rustic bridge to meet the Tavy a few yards further on under the shadow of a great rock in a land that is by no means a weary land, but one that pulsates with life and health.

Instead of grey waves leaping up at the battleship's flanks, here were the dark amber wavelets of a peat-stained moorland river chasing one another in their headlong race down stream and breaking into mimic white horses as they beat against the great boulders of granite, softly veiled with moss and lichen or polished smooth and bright where the waters lapped them in a perpetual caress.

Instead of tall funnels and overhead aerials, here were towering beech trees through whose thick green leaves the brilliant sunlight made a dappled pattern on the rich brown earth and the sweet grass. And instead of the customary view of row after row of sombre grey ships seen across a few intervening cables' lengths of turgid sea there was still grey indeed, but the grey of Scotch firs against the background of a green larch plantation viewed across one of those laughing confluent rivers.

Here was enough to make one echo the sentiment pronounced by Emerson on the occasion of his

first voyage to the Old Country : " But the wonder is always new that any sane man can be a sailor ! "

And a man was there on the spot who had evidently imbibed the same wise sentiment : a man whose russet coat and brown canvas leggings harmonised agreeably with the sylvan surroundings. So also did his occupation, for he was seated on a boulder where the river bank shelves to a little beach of pebbles, and was plying his rod with that perfect contentment which characterises the true fisherman.

I guessed he was the water bailiff : a well-set-up brown-bearded man of between forty-five and fifty years, with a free swinging gait and a clear, strong voice, as a little friendly converse soon showed.

" No luck to-day," he said ; but he had taken a nine-pound salmon out of the same stretch of water only a few days ago. There might be a chance at the evening rise, but that was too long to wait for—he must be packing up and going home. And, ah, this rheumatism ! He couldn't do the journey back quite so quickly as he used to, now !

On his old brown fisherman's coat he was wearing the remnants of a medal ribbon : too dilapidated to guess exactly what it was, but at first sight it seemed most like the Queen's medal of the Boer war. Curiosity prompted a question here, to the which came the reply, " Oh, that ? That's the medal of the Abyssinian Expedition."

? ? ?—! ! !—?

(This is the method used by French writers to express profound questioning astonishment; and, although it has not yet been universally adopted in English books, I can think of nothing better to express my own feelings and remarks at this announcement.)

"Yes," he continued, "I shall be seventy next birthday; you wouldn't think it, would you?"

Think it? Why, no one would, to see this hale and hearty Devonshire angler. But that was not the only mistaken guess, for he was not even the water-bailiff, but just a retired Service man enjoying his well-earned pension.

"I left the Navy twenty-seven years ago," he said; and on hearing that two of his listeners were also Navy men he became a friend at once, and opened out into Navy talk, as all good fellows of the Navy trade should do.

Here he dived into his fisherman's bag and pulled out a couple of juicy apples, the produce of his own Devonshire orchard, chucking them to the youngsters across the intervening grass before settling down to his yarn.

"Things have changed a bit since my time," he began. "Why, I was master-at-arms in the old *Calliope*, and many's the time I have seen a dozen men flogged before breakfast!"

"If you give a boy six cuts with the cane nowadays," I remarked, "it's ten to one he writes to the *Daily Mail* about it."

"Ay! But I can tell you one thing that hasn't changed, and that's the German! Just the same

sort of beast in those days as he is now. You remember there was a German ship amongst those at Samoa? I can tell you a yarn about one of her officers that'll prove what I say. Two or three of the young fellows came along to me one day and said, 'Master, couldn't you get us leave to go ashore here for an hour or so?' 'Daresay I could,' I said; and I thought I might as well go with them myself as I hadn't been out of the ship for some little while. Well, I got permission, and ashore we went. There was just the three or four of us. We didn't go far, but just lay down in the grass under the hot sun and stretched ourselves at our ease. I daresay we were half asleep. But I remember seeing one of the others, a young artificer chap, bending down to tie up his bootlace, when all of a sudden there was a sound as if someone had caught him a terrific back-hander from behind. In fact, that was just what had really happened, for much to his astonishment, and mine, too, when we looked round, there was a German naval officer standing, his face purple with fury. None of us had caught sight of him before, and how he could have got up so close without being noticed by one of us I can't imagine. It was he that had struck our man—and for why, do you think? Well, when I asked him for his reasons he said, 'I am a German naval officer, and this man did not salute me.'

"'How could he salute you, sir,' I said, 'when none of us ever saw you?' But that didn't

satisfy him, and he went off again into a tearing rage.

"Well, to make a long story short, I wasn't going to stand that, and between us we marched him up to the German consulate and made a complaint about the matter, and as soon as we got off to the ship I reported it at once."

"And what happened? Did the affair go any further?"

"To be sure it did! Our captain—a splendid fellow he was!—*he* saw it through all right. Of course, the Germans blustered and fumed, but our captain wasn't going to be put off by any nonsense of that sort. He demanded an apology—and got it, too! The German officer had to climb down. Our captain says to him, 'You can strike one of your own men if you like, *but you can't strike a Britisher*!' Well, I must be getting back, can't go quite so quickly as I used to—terrible thing, this rheumatism."

And so he went off, swinging his way up the valley; and the brown waters still sang their quiet song, as they had sung it in the days when the old *Calliope* was one of the smartest ships on the seven seas. She passed long ago to the last resting-place of old ships; but one of the old breed still lives, and long may he do so: good luck to him!

And I think that the spirit of the old *Calliope* survives, too, in a Navy which is a new thing since the days of the fine fellow we met beside a Dartmoor stream.

XLVII. Old Navy

BEAUTY in steamships ? So I've heard tell,
You modern sailors are full of such tales ;
Maybe you're right, and I'm out o' date—well,
Each to his fancy—*my* fancy's for sails !

Throb o' the piston and swing o' the crank,
Rhythm and music to you they may be ;
Daresay there's music in clinkety-clank,
Only—'twas diff'rent when *I* used the sea !

Then there was beauty that never could pall,
Charm in each sail that the eye lighted on ;
Stuns'ls, t'gallants'ls, royals and all,
Rounded and white like the breast of a swan !

White o' the canvas and blue o' the sky,
Blue o' the water and white o' the foam,
None o' your smoke stacks all tow'ring on high,
Belching out fumes like a fact'ry at home !

Ah, my old ship ! she would skim o'er the main,
Light as a leaf which the autumn wind blows ;
Dipping her bows to the wave, and again
Tossing aside the spray as she rose.

Sailors to-day seem a new breed o' men,
Changed for the better since my day, let's hope ;
Granted, there weren't so much hymn singing then,
But they would all pull their pound on a rope !

Changes and fashions must come, and they will ;
No use in grumbling and cavilling at
Changes. Yet, thank the Lord, there's the sea still,
Just as He made it—ye can't alter that !

XLVIII. Old Ships

SOME little time ago I spent twenty-four hours in one of our obsolete battleships, now used as a depot ship. After many eventful years of sea life she had passed out of active service with the Fleet, and with her glory very much departed she was at last peacefully swinging around a buoy, and likely to remain there until she grounds upon her beef-bones, as the naval phrase goes.

It was a very interesting visit, recalling memories of my first ship; for this particular battleship, though not quite so ancient as the one in which I first made my practical acquaintance with the Navy, was sufficiently contemporary to have retained most of the characteristics of the old Navy—a Navy which is entirely unknown to the great majority of officers and men serving to-day.

The first distinctive feature of the old Navy ship is the delightfully abundant provision of fresh air and daylight. Overhead there are ample skylights, and in every living compartment, mess rooms and cabins, big brass-rimmed scuttles, or portholes, as the shore-goer calls them.

In the days when these ships were built a narrow belt of armour was considered sufficient protection ; if an enemy's shot should strike the unarmoured part, that, I take it, would not have been considered fair play, just as a Chinese general in a besieged city is said to have complained bitterly when the foe made an entrance on the side where he had no guns and no men—a gross breach of chivalry and of the recognised rules of civilised warfare !

A battleship of modern make is buttoned right up to the neck in the very thickest of armour, and in exchange for this greater safety we must barter the sweet daylight and live continually in canned light and tinned air, on the sound principle that comfort is not everything. But in another respect the old ships were the reverse of comfortable. They were warmed by a system of steam pipes, which were fortunately capable of being regulated at other places besides the main source of supply ; to regulate them so as to get any comfort out of them meant shutting them off entirely, since if they were turned on they not only sizzled and leaked but produced an indescribably sickly atmosphere, calculated to give one the very father and mother of a raging splitting headache within three minutes.

To the outward eye the most striking difference lay in the lavish amount of adornment to be seen in the old ships. Figure-heads, of course, went out of fashion ages ago—a very great pity, to my thinking, and I should like to see them brought in

again ; they gave a fine brave appearance to a ship, and the men were extraordinarily proud of them. In many cases they were of very beautiful design and workmanship, as can still be seen from those collections of them which adorn our older dockyards.

But, although figure-heads belong to a Navy which was an old Navy when the most ancient of us were youngsters, their place was taken until quite recently by shields, crests, and devices of scroll work at the bows. These were the last frail attempt of the ship designer to preserve something of the artist's character, the last feeble protest against sheer materialism ; these, too, have gone the way of brass and bright-work and many other emblems of the " Spit-and-Polish " days. Gone, too, are the ornamental ventilators that used to adorn the bulkheads in the officers' quarters in the old ships ; they were of cast-iron work, with the royal arms in the centre of each panel, and really rather nice to look at. In their place, the cabin in which I am now writing is ventilated by a double row of circular holes drilled in the steel bulkhead ; they may be just as useful, but they are certainly not an adornment.

Now, just before the war, everybody used to laugh at the old ships : queer old things, scarcely more than half the length of a modern super-Dreadnought ; their guns were contemptuously likened to soda-water bottles ; their engines, of a kind referred to half pityingly as being of the old push-and-pull or up-and-down variety, could

at their very best knock out a speed which would not take more than one group of boilers in a modern ship; and altogether they were déclassés, obsolete, out-of-date, and everything else which is more or less polite for scrap iron.

We very soon gave up laughing at them when once the war had started. The old ships proved themselves, and are still doing so, in the Mediterranean, in the Channel, and in other places which I know about but must not mention. Not a few of them have met with a fate more glorious than that of being ignominiously towed to the breaking-up yard, and have gone down with colours flying and with many an unstoried act of heroism to mark their last moments.

They were ships of the Peace Era, built at the height of a long period of profound naval peace, and due to end their days before that calm vanished. They were the glory and pride of the ocean in days when the Channel Fleet represented Britain's last word in sea power. Not one of them had ever fired a gun in action. Their quarter-decks, white as holy-stone could make them and glittering with brilliantly polished bright-work, had often been the scene of gay festivities, when the flag awning was spread and bunting red and white wreathed the side stanchions. It was then that the pretty dresses and prettier faces of fair ladies gladdened the eye, while the Maltese band played languorous waltzes for them and their partners in naval blue-and-gold. Yes, indeed, they were fine ships, and beautifully kept, in the

old days. But now, with grey paint splashed profanely over bright-work on which simply to breathe would once have been accounted a hideous crime, with their decks by no means spotless, and all their beauty gone, they still " carry on." For, when all's said and done, it may be the proud super-Dreadnoughts that defend the Empire, but it is the old ships that have seen most of the fighting !

XLIX. De Scribendo Navale

A FORMER member of our mess—namely, "Uncle," one of the heroes of a certain fishing expedition recorded in an earlier volume, who left us some time ago for another sphere of activity—came on board to revisit his old friends the other day.

"Hullo, Padre," he shouted to me across the wardroom, "have you been writing any more tosh lately?"

I had to admit the soft impeachment; and the "fruits of my labours" are those which you have now perused; if, indeed, you have been able to stick them up to this point.

For nobody can be more conscious than myself that "Uncle's" epithet is *le mot juste* for my scribblings; but, then, it is difficult to write anything else but tosh when all the *really* interesting things must, perforce, be left untold. A very renowned writer on naval subjects sent me some time ago a most kind and sympathetic letter saying how well he realised the difficulty of selecting topics that might be touched upon with impunity. He could not have put the case more

aptly. And, although I am rather proud of the fact that only on one single occasion has an article of mine been prohibited from publication by the Admiralty Censor, yet the difficulty is always present of steering a midway course between the Scylla of dullness and the Charybdis of the aforesaid censorship.

Even then—you never know! There is many a lesser Cerberus to be placated. My first little book, "In the Northern Mists," after having met with official approval at the Admiralty, after having been published and sent (I hope) to every country of the English-speaking world, met its Waterloo at last: a friend bought a copy, and posted it from one inland town of England to another a few miles away; but, alas, it was returned to him, undelivered; the local censor refused to pass such dangerous stuff!

But, if only it were permissible and advisable to write of other matters than these, then I really *could* make—but the books which are not written are always more interesting than those which find their way into print, aren't they?

Yet I have tried to convey something of the real life of the Navy, and especially of that part of it which has been my own particular sphere during the war, the Grand Fleet. And if the result appears to lack interest it is partly owing to the fact that the naval side of this present war is largely without incident, or at any rate such incident as one may be permitted to write about. We are the Holders of the Belt, and if the other

fellow wants to dispute the championship and win the belt from us with the purse into the bargain, then it is for him to come and challenge us; meanwhile our part is to hang on to what we have got, and keep the offer open to him to come and have a try for it whenever he likes. It is, from some points of view, a satisfactory part; but nobody can deny that it is sometimes dull!

But what will you? Our High-Explosive Member (alas! he too has left us, and there are but few of the Old Gang left) used to say to me, "Padre, if we *don't* have a proper big fleet action before the war is over, I'll tell you *one* thing, and that is—our name will be Mud with the Army!"

"Well, *I* can't help it!" I used to reply; and that is also my only reply to those who would like me to write of cut-and-slash rough-and-tumble actions, of the roaring of cannon and the fierce delights of battle.

Of such things we have had, in the Grand Fleet, but one single experience; and, as a few years ago the Navy used to be accused of having "Too much Nelson" about it, so also a few years hence naval writers—myself included—may possibly be impeached of "Too much Jutland"; but, I repeat, it is up to the Hun.

Then, again, it is so hard to be sure that a thing will be interesting in the telling, however exciting it may have proved in the doing.

A friend of mine spent many months of the war in a small ship on a foreign station where life was more eventful than it is with us. There was always

something happening, and not a small amount of risk to be faced. There were ships to be convoyed right across the ocean, there were submarines to be dodged, there were neutral vessels to be stopped and searched—always with the chance that any one of them might turn out to be a heavily armed raider in disguise. In fact, life was rather a giddy whirl altogether; and although the good ship got through her commission safely, and my friend paid her off in the same condition himself, yet I fancy he was not altogether sorry to get to a quieter life, and he certainly had many thrilling experiences to talk about.

So when he was invited to dinner with his aunt he said to himself, "Aha, me boy, *now* at last you have qualified for the part of the Little Hero, and you can let yourself go and lash out at it to-night! Do yourself justice, now; don't let your natural modesty stand in your light. If they want to hear about your experiences, tell 'em. It's only the heroes of story-books who do the Strong Silent Man act and refuse to say a word about their doings, thus disappointing the company. Don't you be an ass of that sort; you've been invited to dinner so that you may interest and thrill the other guests, so play up to it, and earn your oats."

His wife also said the same things to him, using, of course, other expressions.

So he buckled on his brightest uniform, and sat down in the place assigned to him. It was at the corner of the table, away from the fire, and between the door and the sideboard so that the maids joggled

his chair every time they came into or out of the room.

When he had lapped up his soup, which he did as quickly as possible before the draught from the door made it quite cold, he fixed his aunt at the other end of the table with his eye and cleared his throat to begin one of his most telling yarns.

But his aunt said, "Shsh! Mr. Smith is just going to tell us about the fearful time he spent one night last week!"

Mr. Smith, it transpired, was a Special Constable, and on the night in question he had been on duty from twelve till two. It had rained. Torrents! And—would you believe it?—he had not seen a single soul all the time he was on duty except one black cat, and even that he could not be *quite* certain about, because it was so dark. Whether because the cat was so dark or because the night was so dark he did not make exactly clear; but, of course, the effect would be the same in either case. He really made a very exciting story of it all.

When he had finished there were little gasps of admiration all around the table.

"*Now,*" said my friend to himself, "*now* is my chance! They shall hear something *really* thrilling after that!"

He was more effectual in catching his aunt's eye this time.

And she said to him: "Had a pleasant time on your boat? You naval men have all the enjoyment these days, *I* think! I hope you have been making

Miss Jones talk to you. She's a V.A.D. Draw her out, Charlie; ask her to tell you about her life in hospital. I *never* heard of such awful things as she has been through—*haven't* you, Miss Jones?"

Miss Jones did not really require much drawing out. She was a pimply lady with hair done like a golf ball that has been rolling in a claypit. She put in a good twenty minutes relating how she had got sore feet by walking in the wards; and all the other people said: "Ah, what horrors war brings with it! Shall we ever be able to sleep without dreaming about the dreadful things you have told us?"

After her an elderly gentleman named Brown chipped in, not without encouragement from his hostess, who glanced invitingly towards him. Brown was in the V.T.C. A very young man amongst the guests tried his hand here at a flippant jest about gorgeous wrecks, but was heavily frowned down; and Brown told them all a very technical story concerning a sham fight in which he had recently taken part. He used all the available table cutlery to illustrate the positions, explaining that of course his hearers could not be expected to understand the affair completely, not being military men like himself. "But I can tell you this much," he said, singling out my friend for a fierce and riveting stare, "if they had been Germans we should have *got* them, sir, *got* them, abso-lootely!"

With this the hostess, having given little nods and eyebrow-liftings to the other ladies, withdrew

with them. During their absence an R.N.R. assistant paymaster who had just joined up elaborated his views on naval strategy, which were listened to with great interest, and when my friend took his departure his aunt said, " I hope you have enjoyed yourself, Charlie ; but, of course, you must have, listening to these people who have been in the thick of it all ! "

In fact, although truth may be stranger than fiction, there is not such a demand for it at the libraries. With very few exceptions I have avoided the more marketable commodity and have written about such facts as have come within my ken. As for naval fiction, that has been excellently " done " in this war-time by two with whom I am proud to boast some slight connection. Bartimæus was a midshipman in my first ship, and as for Taffrail, who was once a flotilla-mate of mine, I should have knocked a lunch out of him the other day, only a flap suddenly occurred and his ship had to put to sea at very short notice ; but I shall touch him for that lunch yet, I hope !

L. *Gentlemen, the King!*

IT is a thing of the past now. In fact, so much a thing of the past that you can go and see it for yourself on the Movies. At least, you may see *some* of it there—the great ships, and the smart well-set-up sailors, and the decks filled with crowds of cheering bluejackets and marines; you can see the little craft, too—the drifters and the minesweepers that have borne so great a share of the naval burden; also you can see the King himself at home with his Fleet. And these things should be enough to make you understand something of what goes on unceasingly on the seas that encircle England, and what the tasks are that occupy the days of those lads in blue, once so familiar a sight in town and village, but now seen only at rare intervals when they come home on their infrequent leave, only to vanish again into the Northern Mists after a few brief days.

But there is a part of the affair which the Movies cannot show you. The flickering pictures, viewed from a comfortable seat in a warm hall, are powerless to represent the crash of the tempest and the battle of the elements which heralded the royal

visit, the roar of the great waves against the sides of the ship that carried him, or the terrific thunder veiling the heavens in a murky green-black pall, torn and set aflame by the rending lightning.

So I will try and tell you some of the things which are not to be seen on the "Pictures."

First of all, as I imagine, something of this sort must have taken place deep down in the ocean caves.

Neptune, the jolly old sea-god, gathered his lesser godlings of the waves and the winds around him. His broad, good-humoured face was beaming with smiles, and he shook the tangled locks and seaweed which crowned his ancient head as he shouted aloud the good news.

"Now, this *is* something like!" he cried; "here comes a King who is an English King, and an English King who is a Sailor King! So smack it about, my hearties, and stir things up a little to give him a regular seaman's welcome! None of your fair-weather sailors, *he* ain't, not by no manner o' means! *He* don't want none o' your glassy seas and blue skies, like wot you lazy, lubberin' boardin'-school misses have been sarvin' out lately! Give him a fair rouser now, just to remind him of the old days when he was cap'n of his own ship; aye, an' prouder o' that than he is now o' being King, I'll be bound! So just show him what you *can* do, lads; let him have the feel of the sea and the taste o' the salt wind once more!"

The lesser godlings heard and obeyed: they

scurried off and got very busy indeed; so that when the King, the English King, the Sailor King, stood on the bridge of the ship that brought him to his Fleet a right royal seamanlike welcome was prepared for him. The skies pealed out a reverberating salute of roaring thunder; the steely rain rattled a ceaseless *feu-de-joie*; loud cheered the boisterous winds; and the waves all clapped their hands and tumbled over one another in their excitement and eagerness to see the King—they even forgot themselves a little, and jostled the King's ship by pressing too close; but did the King mind that? Not he!

It was not until the next day that the excitement calmed completely down. "Avast there, my hearties!" cried old Neptune. "I didn't tell you to go and overdo it, did I? Very well then, belay!" So the godlings put on a chastened smirk and quieted down a little. But, bless you, they were at it again before many hours were over!

One of our men remarked to me: "I think the King looks more comfortable like in his admiral's uniform than he does in his soldier's kit, don't you, sir?"

"Why, of course he does," said I; "it's the rig he has been used to—the one he was brought up to wear. He *looks* more at home in this for the simple reason that he *feels* more at home in it!"

On board ship we all of us think of King George in the light of a sailor rather than that of a king. I was having a yarn with our bos'n on the upper

deck that day—he is an old friend of mine, and we have been shipmates before, so we can speak our minds freely to each other; but, in case you don't know this, I must tell you that a boatswain in H.M. Navy keeps a tight and jealous hold over the innumerable articles which come under his charge, and spends half his lifetime waging a continual warfare against superior officers who endeavour to supply their naval needs by surreptitious raids upon his storeroom.

"Well," said I, "are you coming across to see the King with me this time?"—alluding to the march past, which was to take place in another ship.

"No, sir," answered the bos'n; "he looked hard enough at me the last time, *as if he wanted to pinch some of my stores!*"

I can tell you, there was a great ransacking of drawers and lockers, and a feverish overhauling of kit, in preparation for the said march past. Opportunities for replenishing one's personal gear are not very abundant in the Northern Mists. Brown gloves were the chief difficulty; we had not seen a glove shop for goodness knows how long, and the only forms of gloves we affect as a rule are either canvas gauntlets for work in engine-rooms and turrets or else thick woolly ones, the thicker the better, for the bridge and the upper deck. So we had to make the best of our old pairs, dug out from forgotten hoards of garments long unused. I am now in a position to give this piece of advice to housekeepers: Don't try

cleaning brown gloves with ether, as our Fleet Surgeon did: the result is a horrid blotchy and pallid mess, dreadful to look upon! One officer was very pleased with himself. "I've found a pair!" he cried excitedly, "the backs are all right—very good, in fact; *but the palms are all split up with playing deck hockey!*"

As for the actual details, facts, and programme events of the King's visit, the sights that he saw, and the things that he did, are they not written in the chronicles of the many newspaper correspondents who came in his train? One of these gentlemen I had the pleasure of meeting; and, being a minor scribbler myself, I tried to get him to talk on the interesting subject of journalism. Amongst other questions, I asked him how much space he expected to fill in his newspaper with his description of the King's visit to the Fleet. "That depends," he said. "I cannot say definitely just yet; some other news might happen to come in, and my account might have to be cut down. For instance, on the last occasion, when the King visited the Fleet a year ago, the account was *completely spoiled by the battle of Jutland!*" So much depends upon the point of view, doesn't it?

The Oriental potentate who ruled over the assassins had but to say to one of his warriors, "Fling thyself over yon cliff," and as quickly as the formula that governs the speed of falling bodies could work the trick the loyal fellow was a mangled corse at the foot of the precipice. Supposing that our own monarch were to give a like

command to one of his loyal Highlanders—amongst whom, I suppose, the tribal spirit of unquestioning allegiance runs strongest—the astonished chiel would probably turn on him with "Mon, d'ye think ah'm a dom fule ?"—I trust I have got the Scots idiom correctly. Prosaic people that we are, we have decided that an absolute monarchy is absolute nonsense ; but a limited monarchy is as sound a proposition as a limited liability company. And, being also a poetic people (though we should hate to be told so), we crown our chairman of the board of directors with a halo of romance, and invest him with all the knightly attributes of the age of chivalry.

It also happens that we love him as a man. This explains partly the spontaneous loyal outburst of cheers and the crashing out of the National Anthem when a certain admiral stepped on board. You see, this particular admiral is so astoundingly like the King in face and figure ! It was a little awkward for him, perhaps, but the King, who was down below in the after-cabin at the time, is reported to have been greatly amused.

The newspaper correspondents, to whom I have alluded above, have described the King's visit in methodical detail ; for ourselves, the main thing was when we filed past our King and raised our hands to give him a sailor's salute. The bandsmen of the squadron played a well-known march, and we waited our turn in the smartly-moving procession. It was a simple enough ceremony, perhaps ; just a quick defile past the King, the

Admiral, the Man we respect—and love. We felt he was doing honour to us by his presence there, and we on our part were proud to honour him. Just a wordless greeting as we looked into the King's face—and passed on. Only that; yes, one thing more: the call to us as the King went over the side to the old-time farewell of the bos'n's pipes—the call for "Three cheers for His Majesty the King!"

I wish you could have heard those cheers!

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